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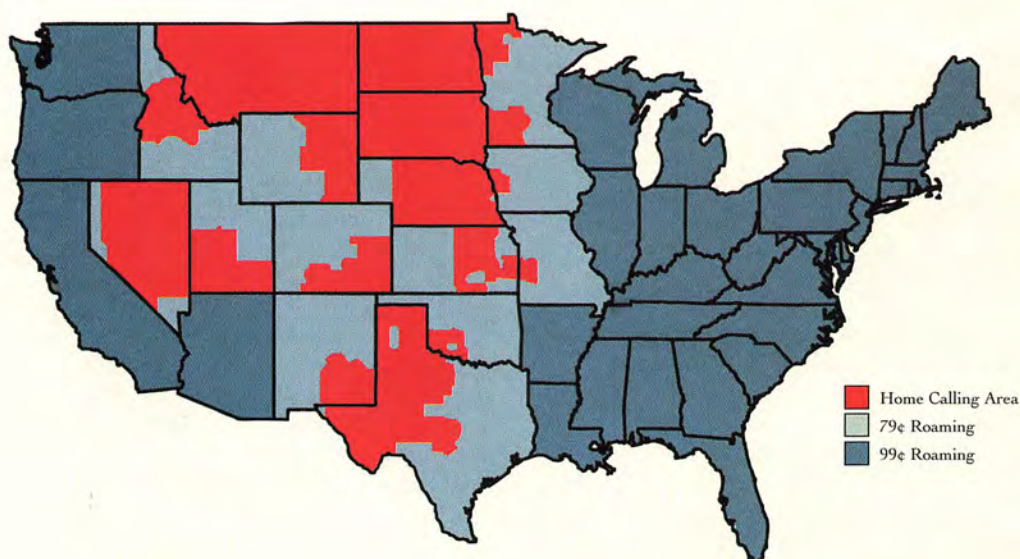
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By Mike Babcock

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Can the Blackshirts duplicate the effort displayed the last time a back wearing No. 34 and eyeing the Heisman came to Lincoln?
By Mike Babcock

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Who's Calling The Plays?

Being a die-hard Husker fan from New Jersey, it's hard to see a lot of the games. It's even harder to find Husker fans. The only way to get Husker stuff is via catalogs. My friends just don't understand my loyalty to the Big Red. My Saturdays are spent in front of televisions all across the tri-state area trying to find a place that will show the Huskers. I'm 32 now and have been faithfully following the Huskers for 27 years.

I don't understand who is calling the plays the offense is running. Thank God I've got long hair because I've pulled most of it out. It seems that the running plays that made the Huskers the premier running team in the country have been put on the shelf. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. I know Frank Solich wants to establish himself as a coach and not live in the shadow of a legend, but you have to stick with what works. Turner Gill is upstairs calling the plays now. I'm a huge fan of T.G., but he needs to look at tapes of the last 10 years and figure out what works and what doesn't. They aren't pitching to the I-back on the option enough. They aren't running between the tackles, either. Thank God the Blackshirts have been up to the task, or we would be in serious trouble. Just think what this team will be over the next three years when Bobby Newcombe and the offensive line finally gel and become a lean mean Big Red machine like we are used to. The country better get ready for the next three years. Here's to the 1999 national champions from the most loyal Husker fan east of the Mississippi.

Joey Bellardita
Kearny, N.J.

Revenge Is Sweet

I guess I should start out by apologizing to the Kansas players and fans. You didn't really do anything to deserve being destroyed by an angry Big Red menace. You just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and ended up bearing the brunt of the Huskers' frustrations after losing to Texas A&M. It's nothing personal, just business. It's no coincidence that the Huskers' best and most dominating performance came on the

heels of a loss. The Huskers always play better under adversity. As far as Texas A&M is concerned, enjoy this win while you can. If you want to win the Big 12 and not just the Big 12 South, you will have to face the Huskers again. Believe me, it will not be a pretty sight. And as long as I'm on the subject of revenge against big schools from Texas, UT really has one coming to them. Do you think we had forgotten about the 1996 championship game? It's not over with this one either. We will play again next year and the year after that. How's that for something to look forward to?

Dexter Hughes
Kansas City, Mo.

The Man For The Heisman

It's tough to find anything to complain about after a 41-0 thrashing of a conference rival, but here goes: Why isn't Joe Walker playing on offense? He is clearly the best athlete on the team. We've seen what he can do returning punts. He is also an outstanding defensive back. All the coaches need to do is let him catch a few passes and run the ball on a reverse now and then, and we'll have a serious Heisman candidate. Anybody remember Charles Woodson? Joe Walker can do everything Woodson do. I'll bet he could even do everything better than Woodson if he was given the chance.

Kelley Diebner
Dallas, Texas

Mind The Letters

All season long people have been writing letters to *Huskers Illustrated* to tell the coaches that the Huskers weren't running the ball enough. So they come out against Kansas, run the ball right up the middle all game long, and what happens? It works and the Huskers win big. It just proves that Nebraska has the smartest fans, not just the best.

Laura Pfizer
Grand Island, Neb.

Got Something To Say?

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BIG 12 NEWS

Notes And Quotes From Around The League

BASHING BACK AT CONFERENCE CRITICS

The national polls the week of Oct. 12 allowed Big 12 coaches to return fire at those who have criticized the three-year old league's performance on the football field.

Six Big 12 schools were listed among the Top 25 teams in both the Associated Press writers' poll and the ESPN/USA Today coaches' poll — Kansas State, Nebraska, Texas A&M, Colorado, Missouri and Texas Tech.

First-year Texas coach **Mack Brown** viewed the Big 12's first two seasons from the outside, when he was coaching at North Carolina in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

"Right now this league is as good as any in the country," Brown said. "The league is coming into its own. For the first two years, it was hard to mesh two leagues (the Big Eight and SWC) that had been so competitive against each other in recruiting. Usually in the third year, good things like this start."

The Big 12 probably brought some of the initial criticism on itself by proclaiming from the outset that it was the nation's best football conference. The national media bought into that idea. When it didn't happen, shots were fired.

"It's totally unfair to compare us to leagues that have been in existence for 20, 30 or 40 years where recruiting and fan bases have been developed," Texas A&M coach **R.C. Slocum** said. "We're a brand new operation, and we're still going through some growing pains. But the coaches have said all along that this is going to be an outstanding conference."

Midway through his first Big 12 season, Brown compared the league to the Southeastern Conference.

"After six weeks in this league, the one thing I know is it is a physical league," Brown said. "You had better be ready to play because there is going to be a bunch of kids running into each other every Saturday."



Having spent many years in the ACC, Texas' Mack Brown puts the Big 12 among the most powerful conferences in the nation in terms of football dominance.

BIG 12'S FUTURE ATTRACTED WEIBERG

The Big 12's football success this season was one of the many factors that convinced **Kevin Weiberg** that he wanted to be the conference's next commissioner.

The deputy commissioner of the Big Ten Conference, Weiberg was selected Oct. 8 by the league's CEOs to replace commissioner **Steve Hatchell**, who resigned under pressure last May.

"I remain convinced this is a great opportunity," Weiberg said. "I think we have some fine athletic programs and universities that have outstanding academic reputations."

"There is no doubt in my mind that this can be one of the handful of conferences that will shape the future landscape of intercollegiate athletics."

The 42-year-old Weiberg is a native of Anthony, Kan., and graduate of Kansas State. He worked in the sports information business at Wayne (Neb.) College and Wichita State before entering the administrative side at Wichita State and Maryland.

A member of the Big Ten staff since 1989, Weiberg could be viewed as working for the enemy by some Big 12 people. It's long been rumored that the Big Ten will go after some Big 12 schools when it decides to expand.

"Like with any conference getting started, the merging groups are entitled to a period of adjustment," Weiberg said. "It's my sense that some of what I've heard and seen written about teams leaving has been blown out of proportion. When you start anew, you're going to have challenges and disagreements."

One of the first challenges for Weiberg when he starts next January could be to prove to Big 12 athletic directors that he's the right man for the job. The ADs made no secret of the fact that their top choice was Virginia athletic director **Terry Holland**.

The CEOs, however, made it clear from the outset of the search that they would make the final choice. They kept their word when they ignored the ADs' wishes and went with Weiberg over Holland.

"Clearly, Kevin has a vision of intercollegiate athletes at this point as we near the end of the 20th century, and this commitment and vision are shared by the Big 12 board," said Kansas chancellor **Robert Hemenway**, chairman of the Big 12 CEOs. ■ — **Dave Sittler**

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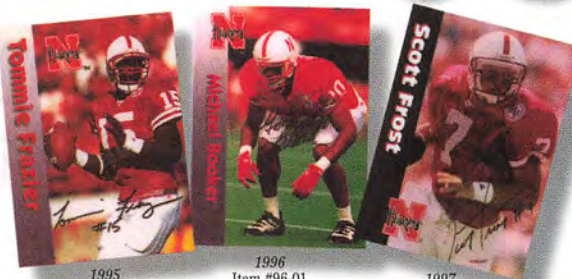
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Scott Bruhn



Frank Solich's first season as head coach has begun much like his predecessor Tom Osborne's; both lost early in the season after following a Nebraska legend (in Osborne's case he battled constant comparisons to Bob Devaney).



Great Expectations

Nobody said it was going to be easy following a legend, but Frank Solich is making the most of his promotion

The record shows that **Tom Osborne** and **Bob Devaney** didn't win every game they coached at Nebraska — just an overwhelming majority. And both had to endure some difficult times.

Devaney fell into disfavor after 6-4 records in 1967 and 1968. A petition calling for his dismissal was circulated in Omaha in 1968. Two years later, Devaney, who also was serving as athletic director by then, coached the Cornhuskers to the first of two consecutive national championships.

Osborne nearly left Nebraska for Colorado in 1978, in large part because of disaffection arising over the Cornhuskers' inability to beat Big Eight rival Oklahoma. He would have accepted a much more lucrative contract from Colorado had it not been for the players.

He said he wouldn't have felt right coaching against those he recruited.

Osborne had to endure criticism again in the early 1990s when Nebraska dropped a notch in national competition. The drop was only temporary, however. By the mid-1990s, Osborne's program was the best in the land, winning three national championships in four seasons.

Enter **Frank Solich**, who inherited a 14-game winning streak from Osborne. Solich's first team increased the streak to 19 before finally losing at Texas A&M, 28-21.

The loss was only the fourth for the Cornhuskers in the last six seasons.

"It does happen," said senior center **Josh Heskew**, who had endured only two previous losses as a Cornhusker, against Arizona State and Texas when he was a sophomore in 1996.

"We expect to win every game." But sometimes, expectations aren't met.

The loss at Texas A&M was significant, not only because it ended the winning streak and knocked Nebraska from the No. 2 national ranking, but also because it was Solich's first as head coach.

And coupled with a lackluster offensive performance the previous week during a 24-17 victory against Oklahoma State in Kansas City, it was cause for some concern in the program.

In response to a question at a news conference on the Tuesday after the Texas A&M game, Solich discussed team goals and how he had addressed them with his players.

The key, he said, was to "just make sure your players understand that those are goals we thought were attainable. But at some point in time if goals are not attainable and you start adjusting them, you do so. If it comes down to just having pride and the fight to be a good football team, to get done what you can get done, if all the goals get wiped out for a team, there should still be that for them."

"There should still be the fight. There should still be the pride in themselves, in their teammates, to go out and play the best football they can play. And I don't doubt our team will be that way."

"If we get eliminated from a goal or two, then we get eliminated from a goal or two. That should not affect the way we play. Our players understand that, and I think our coaches have been in the business long enough to understand that. Certainly, if you're used to meeting goals and then all of a sudden a number of them are wiped out, it is tougher. I don't think there's any question," said Solich.

"But Nebraska has gone through years where we've not met some of the goals that were set out there. It's not every year that we've won a national championship. We've won our share. But there are times when we weren't able to meet some of those goals. Those teams survived and did very, very well."

Solich's first season as head coach has had a beginning similar to Osborne's in 1973.

Osborne's first coaching loss came in the fifth game, against Missouri. The Cornhuskers were ranked No. 2 nationally by the Associated Press when they went to Columbia, Mo. But they came away 13-12 losers because of a failed two-point conversion attempt

Random QUOTES

"Coach (Ron) Brown said it best last week. He said a bird flies, a lizard crawls and Nebraska football teams run the football. That's what we do, and we're going to keep doing it."

— **Matt Davison**

"My favorite receiver is the open man."

— **Bobby Newcombe**

"Bobby is a tremendous athlete, and I think he's gaining valuable experience, game by game. You look at it and he really has not played in a lot of football games when he's 100-percent healthy."

— **Frank Solich**

late in the game.

Nebraska was tied by Oklahoma State in Stillwater two weeks later, and the Cornhuskers lost again in the final regular-season game at Oklahoma, 27-0, before beating Texas in the Cotton Bowl.

Nebraska's 9-2-1 record in 1973 was identical to its record in 1972, Devaney's final season as head coach. Yet the two seasons were perceived as being significantly different, according to Osborne, and "a lot of it was attributed to play-calling and offensive design," he has said.

The play-calling and offensive design weren't appreciably different, however.

There seemed to be a similar perception after the Texas A&M loss. Some even went so far as to suggest that had Osborne still been the coach, the Cornhuskers would have won.

Solich, no doubt, anticipated such a response, as well as the advice that came with it.

"You always get suggestions from outside the program," he said. "You get them when you win. You get them when you lose. That's just the way it is." ■

QUICK HITS

What's Happening In Nebraska Athletics?

ADD TO THE READING LIST

Tommie Frazier was the definitive quarterback for **Tom Osborne's** option offense. "If I were to choose one player who has had the most impact on the outcome of the greatest number of games over the longest period of time since I've been at Nebraska, it would be Tommie Frazier," Osborne has said.

Few Cornhusker fans would argue with that. Frazier had an extraordinary college career.

However, it wasn't without disappointments and frustrations, not the least of which were caused by the blood-clot problem that sidelined him for much of his junior season in 1994. Those were certainly the most public. But there were others, including those created by the perception that he was aloof.

Frazier, a private person, discusses his trials and tribulations, as well as his triumphs, in *Touchdown Tommie*, an autobiography released recently by Cross Training Publishing.

Frazier worked with **Bob Schaller**, former sports editor of the *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, on the 192-page book, which includes 16 pages of color photographs, a foreword by Osborne, an introduction by Florida coach **Steve Spurrier** and an epilogue with Frazier's 15 keys to success.

Key to success No. 15 (which was Frazier's jersey number, of course) is, as Frazier wrote is to put children first: "One thing I committed myself to is being a positive influence on children."

RECORD-SETTING PERFORMANCE

Matt Davison's 167 receiving yards on 10 catches in the 28-21 upset loss at Texas A&M broke Nebraska's single-game record by a yard. **Chuck Malito** had 166 receiving yards against Hawaii in 1976. Davison started the game because **Kenny Cheatham** was sidelined by a shoulder separation.

Davison said afterward that he was willing to be the Cornhuskers' go-to receiver.

"I'm ready," said the sophomore from Tecumseh, Neb. "I'm ready whenever they want to call on me. And I've been ready. But I don't think my role's going to change. I've had one game where it was a deal where we needed to throw the ball, and I tried to step up and make a few big plays."

"I know that's not going to happen every game."

Despite the flurry of receptions, Davison said he didn't expect he would be looked to for leadership, "not a bit. I'm still just a sophomore, and there are a lot of good seniors on the receiving corps."

"I'm just a little piece of the puzzle as far as the receiving corps goes. I catch a few balls here and there, but I'm not trying to step on anybody's toes. We have some good leaders."

Sophomore quarterback **Bobby Newcombe**, who threw the passes, said he didn't single out Davison. "He did a great job of catching the ball, but I wasn't just going at him the whole game."

"He was put in routes that made him wide-open. Whoever's open, I'm going to hit him."

NEPO RECEIVES HONOR

Fiona Nepo was named Big 12 Volleyball Player of the week for the second time this season. The senior setter averaged 19.43 assists and 3.71 digs in wins over No. 12 Texas and No. 15 Texas A&M. ■



Tommie Frazier

What's Wrong Here?

The Big 12 has four running backs among the NCAA's top five, but none of them plays for Nebraska



Mike BABCOCK

THIS HAS BEEN the year of the running back in the Big 12.

In mid-October, the conference had three of the nation's top four rushers, led by Texas tailback Ricky Williams, who will play trick or treat with Nebraska this week at Memorial Stadium.

Missouri's Devin West, with whom the Blackshirts dealt last week, and Texas Tech's Ricky Williams ranked second and fourth, respectively, in NCAA rushing statistics released Oct. 11.

Texas' Williams, who led the nation in rushing last season, is the frontrunner in the chase for the Heisman Trophy and could break Tony Dorsett's NCAA career rushing record.

That the Big 12 is so well represented in NCAA rushing statistics should be no surprise.

The conference is becoming increasingly run-oriented, to some degree because of Nebraska's remarkable success in recent seasons. The Cornhuskers have demonstrated the benefits of being able to run the ball, and other teams in the conference are following Nebraska's lead. To compete with the best, you have to take the same strategic approach as the best. At least, that's the idea.

For example, the Cornhuskers had problems beating Oklahoma with any consistency until they began recruiting quarterbacks who were athletic and fast — Sooner-type quarterbacks.

Such quarterbacks also are becoming the norm in the Big 12 because of Nebraska.

But running backs seem to be stealing the show in the conference.

Anyway, the Cornhuskers have set the standard. Yet surprisingly enough, they don't have a rusher among the Big 12 leaders, and barring an extraordinary stretch run by Correll Buckhalter or DeAngelo Evans, they won't have a 1,000-yard rusher for only the fifth time in the last 20 seasons.

I.M. Hipp rushed for 936 yards in 1978, alternating with Rick Berns, who rushed for 933 yards. Keith Jones rushed for 830 yards and 14 touchdowns to lead the conference in both categories in 1986. Leodis Flowers rushed for 940 yards in 1990. And Ahman Green rushed for 917 yards in 1996, despite injuries that sidelined him for two games and significantly limited him in a couple of others.

Regardless of how its I-backs finish, Nebraska almost certainly won't have a first-team all-conference running back, a situation that has occurred only twice since 1978 — in 1990 and 1993.

That no Cornhuskers are on pace to rush for 1,000 yards is a symptom, rather than a cause, for the significant and much-discussed team drop-off in rushing yardage this season.

The decline was dramatically apparent in back-to-back games against Oklahoma State and Texas A&M, in which Nebraska rushed for a combined 214 yards. Evans' 41 yards led Cornhusker rushers against Oklahoma State, while Bobby Newcombe's 56 yards were the best at Texas A&M.

Nebraska has remained committed to the run, however. "That's one of the reasons Nebraska has been so successful, because they've been able to overpower other teams on the line," said Newcombe.

The problem has been that opposing defenses are putting eight and nine players at the line of scrimmage, and "you can't block nine guys with six guys," said split end Matt Davison.

Nebraska has been forced to pass more this season in an attempt to alleviate some of the pressure against the run. "But we are not going to abandon the ground game," coach Frank Solich said. "You never want to give up on the run just because they have eight or nine people trying to stop it."

"Because when you do break a run, it's one that's going to go the distance."

At midseason, the offensive line was taking most of the blame for the Cornhuskers' inability to run the ball. But the responsibility didn't rest only with the line, according to Solich.

"When I say blocking well, I include, really, everybody who doesn't have the football," he said.

Texas doesn't figure to offer significant resistance to the run, and neither does Iowa State next week. But the NU ground game will get a severe test at Kansas State.

"With our style of football, everybody expects us to run the ball, and we have to do that," said senior center Josh Heskew. "We don't like to give up on things."

"That's our game plan. We keep pounding and pounding."

That pounding up front has produced 1,000-yard rushers in 16 of the last 20 seasons, which is why you would expect Nebraska to be represented in the year of the running back in the Big 12. ■



Barring an extraordinary stretch run by Correll Buckhalter (above) or DeAngelo Evans, Nebraska won't have a 1,000-yard rusher for only the fifth time in the last 20 years.

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Tom Osborne may have spoken the gospel when it came to football, but he also made the Gospel available for those who were interested



Bill DOLEMAN

WITH THREE NATIONAL TITLES in four years, it's understandable that the coaching community would be interested in Nebraska's secrets to success. Husker assistant coach Ron Brown recalls a speech that Tom Osborne delivered at Nebraska's annual coaches clinic last April.

His former boss outlined three key elements, Brown said.

First was the switch from a "50" to a four-man defensive front, which allowed the Huskers to get more speed on the field. Second was the formation of the players' Unity Council, which, according to Brown, "keeps everybody on the same page and accountable to each other."

The third reason, no doubt, caught the several hundred in attendance a little off-guard. It wasn't a set, a scheme or a strategy that Osborne pointed to as he preached the gospel of Nebraska Football.

It was the Gospel, period, Brown said.

"Finally, Coach Osborne said it was the boldness in the profession of faith in Jesus Christ from both the coaches and players," Brown recalled. "It was an interesting comment. What Tom was saying is that there is an atmosphere here that allows young people to express their freedom to worship God."

It's no secret that Osborne emphasized the development of a player's spiritual life as well as his athletic and academic performance. It's not as though a Bible was handed out with every playbook, but there was an environment established at the top — one that continues to be nurtured in the program.

"Nothing is forced upon anyone," said Brown. "It's just that there are opportunities available for anyone who wants to worship."

Those opportunities include chapel and Mass services, which are held — home and away — on game day, and there is a moment of silence that allows for prayer in the lockerroom before and after every game. For the coaches there is an optional 10-minute devotional each morning before the full staff gathers for its morning meetings at 7:10 a.m. And on Wednesdays, more than 40 student-athletes take part in one of the four Bible studies directed by Chris Bubak of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

"What we try to show them is that what the Bible says about life is real," Bubak said. "When you grow in obedi-

ence to God, it changes your outlook, and it prepares you for life."

Bubak has been ministering to student-athletes at Nebraska for five years, and he still maintains close relationships with a number of former Bible study participants. Among them are former Husker standouts and current NFL players Mike Minter, Michael Booker and Tony Veland.

"It just started with me sharing my faith with them, and now I consider them my brothers," said Bubak. "All three of them continue to walk and grow in their Christian faith, and you can tell that it means more to them now than it ever has."

When you get that kind of response to the message we share and you can develop those kinds of relationships, it gives me a lot of hope in what we do here."

He's not alone in his mission.

"Is it important?" Brown asks rhetorically. "Yes, because literally hundreds of lives have been changed over the years. Guys get to see it in the people within this program who are living a life guided by their own faith in Christ."

Among the athletes who have grown in their spiritual life is Aaron Wills. The junior from Omaha was kicked off the team a year ago after he tested positive for marijuana. But more than just losing his spot on the team, Wills admits that his life hit rock bottom. Instead of giving in to a life of drugs or even to thoughts of suicide, he turned to God. Since then, he's gotten a second chance on life and on football.

"I really believe the Lord's presence is on this team more than people think,"

Wills said. "Football is a unique opportunity for me and other guys to spread the Gospel. I can tell people exactly what happened to me, and there are about 10 guys that I minister to. There are others who are seeking meaning in life who have an opportunity in Bible study."

"Just like you need your daily food, you need to feed the spirit. I get something out of every study I go to, and now I walk around with joy in my heart in whatever I set out to accomplish."

Anyone who can say that will also tell you that it's a greater and more lasting joy than any championship could possibly bring. ■



Among the athletes who have grown in their spiritual life at Nebraska is Aaron Wills, who was kicked off the team last year after testing positive for marijuana.

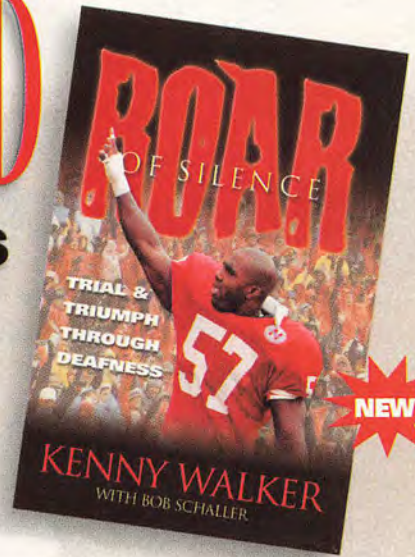
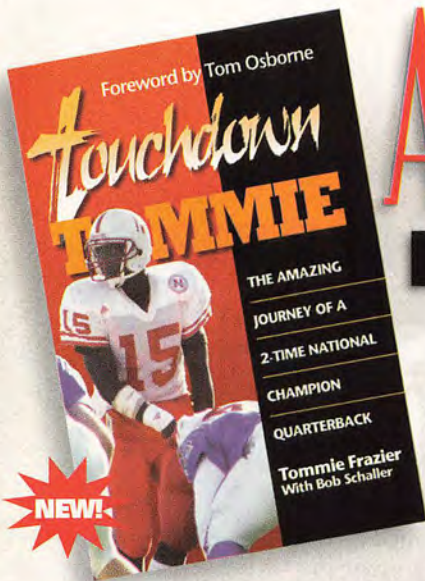
Bill Doleman's face is familiar to Cornhusker fans. He is host for several Nebraska-related television programs including the "Husker Show" and coaches' shows for Terry Pettit, Paul Sanderford and Frank Solich.

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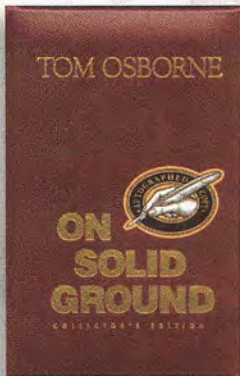
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A very private person of few words, Frazier speaks out for the first time to answer questions people have long asked. Follow along in *Touchdown Tommie* as Frazier blends an interesting mix of off-the-field and on-the-field stories about triumph and tragedy, from long days in the hospital to his relationship with Tom Osborne, and find out the rest of the story behind one of Nebraska's most intriguing legends, Tommie Frazier.

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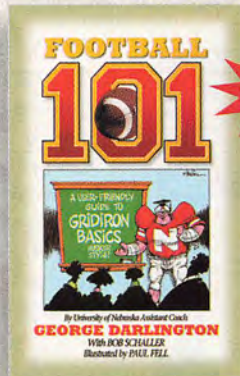
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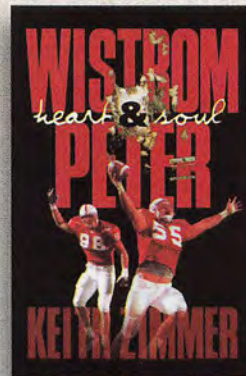
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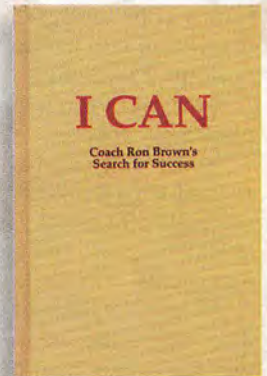
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Watch Ricky Run. Watch Ricky Win The Heisman.

Granted, the Blackshirts will be looking to slow Texas' Williams, but fans of college football, no matter how much red they wear, will want to watch



Curt McKEEVER

THE LAST TIME Texas' Ricky Williams faced Nebraska's defense, he was a bit player in the Longhorns' 37-27 Big 12 championship upset of the Huskers in 1996.

Eight carries, seven yards.

Don't look for anything close to that when Texas plays at Nebraska Saturday. In fact, if you're fortunate enough to be among those in attendance, you might think about saving your ticket stub.

After all, it's not often you get the chance to see the Heisman Trophy winner in person.

OK, so Williams hasn't won college football's most prestigious award yet. But if it comes down to a close race, my hunch is he will get a lot of swing votes because of how he handles himself out of uniform. Maybe that's not what the award is about, but I certainly would feel no guilt casting my vote his way.

Ricky Williams shouldn't be racing toward Tony Dorsett's all-time career rushing record of 6,082 yards this season. He should be in the NFL making some general manager look like a genius.

Instead, he delayed becoming a millionaire for the chance to cherish the college experience one final time. Coaches, moms and dads everywhere should be thanking the elementary education major, who aspires to be a teacher after his playing career ends.

"I see how kids look up to athletes and realize that my staying in school sets a good example," Williams said after announcing he would return for his senior year. "I think as a Texas football player I have a tremendous opportunity to influence kids' lives in a positive way."

Williams went on to talk about some things money can't buy: camaraderie, team togetherness and loyalty.

After six games, Williams led the country with 1,225 yards and 22 touchdowns. The last player to finish the season No. 1 in both of those categories was Colorado's Rashaan Salaam. Of course, he won the 1994 Heisman.

Williams got to those totals with a 139-yard, two-touchdown performance in the Cotton Bowl against the Longhorns' archrival, Oklahoma.

Williams had switched jerseys — from No. 34 to 37 — in homage to former SMU great Doak Walker, who died two weeks earlier.

After the game, Williams presented his jersey to mem-

bers of the Walker family, apologizing for the blood and grass stains.

His performance allowed him to surpass Herschel Walker for third place on the NCAA all-time rushing list with 5,380 yards. The only other player between he and Dorsett is now Charles White, who won the 1979 Heisman.

"If Ricky breaks Tony Dorsett's record, he has to win the Heisman Trophy. Everybody up there has already won it," Texas coach Mack Brown said. "He's already passed a whole lot of guys, while having fewer carries, who won the Heisman."

Brown gets no argument here.

The only team to hold Williams in check so far has been Kansas State, which has the nation's top defense. During their 48-7 victory against the Longhorns, the Wildcats limited Williams to 43 yards on 25 carries.

Williams didn't sulk long. The next week he gained 318 yards and scored six touchdowns against Rice.

The following Saturday, he carried for a school-record 350 yards against Iowa State.

Early in the fourth quarter, Williams was three yards shy of Roosevelt Leaks' 25-year-old school single-game rushing mark. Brown told Williams he'd give him three plays to get the record. After a 1-yard run, Williams bolted for nine more.

"I handed off to him, and after the run, I never saw him leap up and jump around like that (before)," quarterback Major Applewhite told the *Austin American-Statesman*. "I thought, 'Why's he doing that? Something big must be happening.' Then I heard the P.A. announcer."

Leaks, who was in Darrell K. Royal Memorial Stadium that evening, was taking nothing Williams did for granted.

"The young man can run the rock," he said after the game. "I was decent, Earl Campbell was great, and then there's Ricky Williams. He's somewhere between (Walter) Payton, Jim Brown and Earl. He has that kind of repertoire."

As each week in the 1998 season goes by, it's hard not to gain more respect for the dreadlocked, reggae music-loving Williams.

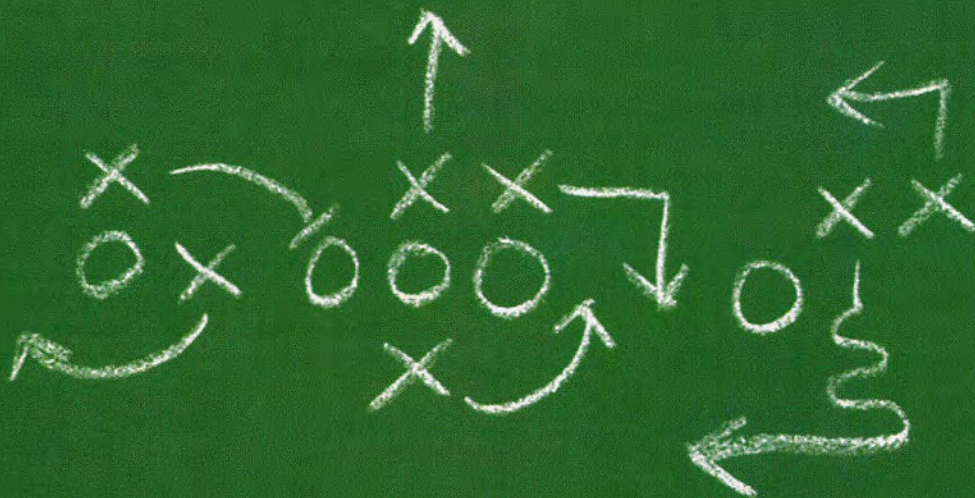
Consider yourself lucky if you get to see his act in person. ■



There is no character issue involving Williams, who wore the deceased Doak Walker's number against Oklahoma.

Harry Lentz

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.



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Williams Grabs Team By The Horns

Ricky's run for the Heisman shouldn't overshadow team's improvement under Mack Brown

By Mark DEROWITSCH

Chances are Texas running back Ricky Williams won't be in position to become the all-time leading rusher in college football history when he visits Lincoln on Saturday.

Williams ran for 259 yards against Baylor and now has 5,639 yards during his career at Texas. He trails only Tony Dorsett of

Pittsburgh, who rushed for 6,082 yards from 1973 through 1976.

TEXAS

1998 Schedule/Results

S5	New Mex. St.	W, 66-36
S12	at UCLA	L, 49-31
S19	at Kansas St.	L, 48-7
S26	Rice	W, 59-14
O3	Iowa St.	W, 54-33
O10	vs. Oklahoma	W, 34-3
O24	Baylor	W, 30-20
O31	at Nebraska	
N7	Oklahoma St.	
N24	at Texas Tech	
N27	Texas A&M	

If Williams can put together back-to-back average games, he'll leave Lincoln with the record in his sights. Average to Williams is spectacular to just about any other running back.

Through seven games this season, Williams has gained 1,484 yards on the ground, or more than 200 per game. Every time he touches the ball, he moves forward 6.5 yards.

Right now, Williams isn't too worried about breaking Dorsett's record.

"I haven't felt any pressure yet, but I might feel some pressure when I get closer to the record," Williams said. "I'm just having fun right now. My number one goal is to help the team win, and that helps me keep things in perspective."

Of course, the best chance Texas has to win any game is to give the ball to Williams and let the 6-foot, 225-pound senior wear down a defense.

Even without touching the ball, Williams can be dangerous. His presence alone has opened the Longhorns' passing game up. Freshman Major Applewhite, who took over as the Texas starter at quarterback when Richard Walton was injured, has held on to the job and has led the Longhorns to four straight wins. As a team, Texas leads the Big 12, and ranks eighth nationally, in total offense, averaging nearly 500 yards per game, of which 260 is gained through the air.

It all goes back to Williams.

"People have asked about Ricky's success," Texas Coach Mack Brown said. "There is no doubt that our best chance to win as a team is when Ricky

TEXAS
(5-2)



NEBRASKA
(7-1)



Ricky WILLIAMS



Joel MAKOVICKA

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is running the ball. This also helps the pass protection, and allows the quarterbacks to throw the ball. We are as balanced offensively right now as any team in America."

Brown doesn't take anything away from Williams, who played minor league baseball until he gave up the sport this summer to concentrate full-time on football. Before the season is over, Brown believes Williams will go

Tentative 2 Deeps

NEBRASKA OFFENSE

SE	3	Matt Davison*	6-0	180	So.
	8	John Gibson	5-11	180	So.
LT	69	Adam Julch**	6-5	315	Jr.
	72	Ben Gessford*	6-2	290	Sr.
LG	63	James Sherman**	6-2	295	Jr.
	54	Dominic Raiola	6-2	300	Fr.
C	59	Josh Heskew***	6-3	290	Sr.
	54	Dominic Raiola	6-2	300	Fr.
RG	72	Ben Gessford*	6-2	290	Sr.
	55	Russ Hochstein*	6-3	280	So.
RT	65	Jason Schwab*	6-1	300	Jr.
	72	Ben Gessford*	6-2	290	Sr.
TE	88	Sheldon Jackson***	6-4	245	Sr.
	85	T.J. DeBates**	6-3	250	Jr.
QB	12	Bobby Newcombe*	6-0	195	So.
-or-	7	Monte Christo	6-0	195	Sr.
FB	45	Joel Makovicka***	5-11	240	Sr.
	15	Willie Miller*	6-0	230	So.
IB	4	DeAngelo Evans*	5-9	210	So.
	36	Correll Buckhalter*	6-0	225	So.
WB	5	Shevin Wiggins**	5-11	200	Sr.
	82	Sean Applegate*	5-9	190	Jr.
PK	35	Kris Brown***	5-10	205	Sr.

NEBRASKA DEFENSE

LR	57	Chad Kelsay***	6-3	250	Sr.
	83	Kyle Vanden Bosch*	6-4	260	So.
NT	96	Steve Warren**	6-1	305	Jr.
	70	Jason Lohr	6-3	275	Fr.
DT	99	Jason Wiltz**	6-4	310	Sr.
-or-	91	Loran Kaiser*	6-5	280	So.
RR	84	Mike Rucker***	6-6	250	Sr.
	81	Aaron Willis	6-2	240	Jr.
SLB	37	Tony Ortiz	6-0	215	Jr.
-or-	46	Brian Shaw**	6-1	215	Jr.
MLB	44	Jay Foreman***	6-1	240	Sr.
	13	Carlos Polk*	6-3	245	So.
WLB	1	Eric Johnson**	6-1	205	Sr.
	50	Julius Jackson**	6-0	235	Jr.
LCB	16	Erwin Swiney*	6-0	185	So.
	3	Keyuo Craver	6-0	180	Fr.
FS	21	Mike Brown**	5-10	205	Jr.
	19	Clint Finley*	5-11	200	So.
ROV	25	Joe Walker*	5-10	200	So.
	42	Troy Watchorn	5-11	195	So.
RCB	22	Ralph Brown**	5-9	180	Jr.
	9	Khari Reynolds*	5-10	185	So.
P	23	Bill Lafleur***	5-11	200	Sr.

Tentative 2 Deeps

TEXAS DEFENSE

LE	49	Aaron Humphrey	6-3	255	Jr.
	51	Brandon Nava	6-3	250	Jr.
LT	64	Casey Hampton	6-1	300	So.
	90	Aaron Colvin	6-4	250	Fr.
RT	50	Cedric Woodard	6-3	280	Jr.
	73	Shaun Rogers	6-4	305	So.
RE	84	J.J. Kelly	6-2	237	So.
	89	Jermaine Anderson	6-3	207	Fr.
SLB	55	Anthony Hicks	6-0	232	Jr.
	38	Aaron Babino	6-1	215	Jr.
MLB	46	Dusty Renfro	6-0	239	Sr.
	42	Everick Rawls	6-1	216	Fr.
WLB	4	De'Andre Lewis	6-1	225	Fr.
	45	Marcus Wilkins	6-2	215	Fr.
LCB	31	Tony Holmes	5-9	180	Sr.
	27	Chris Butcher	6-0	191	Jr.
FS	6	Quentin Jammer	6-1	180	So.
	24	Greg Brown	6-2	200	So.
SS	7	Donald McCowen	6-0	205	So.
	23	Lee Jackson	6-3	193	Fr.
RCB	17	Joe Walker	6-0	175	So.
	15	Ervis Hill	5-9	178	Fr.
P	13	Kris Stockton	5-9	185	So.

TEXAS OFFENSE

FL	9	Kwame Cavil	6-2	200	So.
	22	Ryan Nunez	5-9	174	Jr.
LT	75	Octavious Bishop	6-5	330	Sr.
	70	Leonard Davis	6-6	350	So.
LG	72	Roger Roesler	6-5	300	Sr.
	65	Travis Wood	6-3	295	Sr.
C	54	Russell Gaskamp	6-4	305	Sr.
	78	Marcel Blanchard	6-4	300	So.
RG	79	Ben Adams	6-5	315	Sr.
	76	A. Kirk-Hughes	6-3	320	Fr.
RT	67	Jay Humphrey	6-7	300	Sr.
	66	Cory Quye	6-6	315	So.
TE	82	Derek Lewis	6-2	235	Fr.
	80	Chad Irwin	6-3	252	Fr.
QB	11	Major Applewhite	6-1	195	Fr.
	10	Richard Walton	6-5	225	Sr.
RB	34	Ricky Williams	6-0	225	Sr.
	3	Hodges Mitchell	5-7	190	So.
RB	44	Ricky Brown	6-0	222	Jr.
	25	Michael Boudoin	6-2	242	Sr.
SE	8	Vane McGarity	5-9	190	Sr.
	1	Bryan White	5-10	180	Sr.
K	13	Kris Stockton	5-9	185	So.

down as one of the best running backs to ever play college football.

"If the offensive line can control the line of scrimmage and can keep Ricky running like he has been, then he will have a great chance to break the all-time rushing record," Brown said. "He will also have a great chance to win the Heisman."



Texas' run defense, which was a concern heading into the season, may have turned the corner in the Longhorns' 34-3 win over Oklahoma.

Williams placed fifth in the Heisman Trophy balloting last season, after rushing for 1,893 yards as a junior. That performance set the school record for most yards gained in a single season, breaking the mark held by ex-Longhorn great and 1978 Heisman Trophy winner Earl Campbell.

HI Predictions

Shawn Heilbron NU, 41-31
Comment: Williams not enough for UT.
Steve Roe NU, 38-21
Comment: UT's D can't slow Huskers.

Williams has already erased Campbell's Texas record for career rushing yards.

Behind Williams, the Longhorns could end the season among the nation's elite teams. It may be a reach to get there, having lost to Kansas State and UCLA already this season. But beating Nebraska and winning the South Division of the Big 12 could make Texas a major player come bowl time.

The losses to Kansas State, ranked third in the country, and UCLA, ranked second, still could come back and bite the Longhorns, but it prepared them for the rest of the season.

"It is interesting to see that we've played two of the top five teams in the country already," Brown said. "Scheduling means so much right now across America as far as how you might come out in the end. I think playing those two games hurt us because it took us out of the polls. At the same time, I think it helped us to play Kansas State and UCLA because we saw fastballs for two straight weeks."

While Texas boasts of having the best offense in the Big 12, its defense is near the bottom of the pile. The Longhorns are giving up an average of 403 yards and 31.7 points per game to their opponents. That's even after Texas limited Oklahoma to just three points in a 34-3 victory at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas on Oct. 10.

In order for Texas to compete for a conference championship, the defense must get better. Brown realizes this, and sees his squad moving in the right direction.

"The big question for us is defense, and it will be our biggest question over the next five games," Brown said of a stretch where the Longhorns play Baylor, Nebraska, Oklahoma State, Texas Tech and Texas A&M.

"Still, it seems like we're getting better. We felt that defense as well as our young kicking game were keys in this conference, and we still have room to improve in those areas over the next five games." ■

TALE OF THE APE

Who Has The Edge?

QUARTERBACKS

James Brown, a Husker killer during the 1996 Big 12 Championship game, is long gone. Texas can still go deep thanks to surprising redshirt freshman Major Applewhite. Nebraska's Bobby Newcombe could have a big day.



RUNNING BACKS

Correll Buckhalter and company are good, but Ricky Williams is the best in college football. Any questions? Williams is so good that it's scary. The fact that he's a class individual off the field isn't.



RECEIVERS

Longhorns have speed to burn with Kwame Cavil and Wane McGarity. Longhorn plan must include the deep ball to loosen Huskers up, and they have the talent to do it. Matt Davison should have a big game for Nebraska.



OFFENSIVE LINE

Texas is good, but Huskers are better. Nebraska hogs could have a field day against shaky Texas defense. Texas front five does a great job opening holes for Williams, but Blackshirts may be too tough.



DEFENSIVE LINE

Huskers' stats are good, but they haven't faced an attack like Texas. Still, NU is better in the trenches. Aaron Humphrey has preformed well since moving from linebacker to defensive end.



LINEBACKERS

Jay Foreman could have a monster game. He may need to against Williams. Texas' group was once a weak spot, but freshman De'Andre Lewis was moved from fullback to outside linebacker and has been solid.



SECONDARY

This will be the biggest test for Huskers since Troy Edwards and Louisiana Tech came to town. Texas defensive backs are young and improving rapidly. Safety Quentin Jammer is a star in the making.



SPECIAL TEAMS

If this decides the game, Nebraska is a lock. Kris Stockton handles kicking and punting chores for the Longhorns. He has been steady as a place-kicker, but his punting has been somewhat shaky.



TB RICKY WILLIAMS VS NU DEFENSE KEY MATCHUP

It may take all 11 Huskers to slow down the Williams Express, but Nebraska can't afford to sell out everything to stop the run. The key in this matchup will be the play of the Husker defensive line, which has shown signs of vulnerability.

The Longhorns have an experienced offensive line to pave the way for Williams, a hard-nose runner with excellent speed. Four seniors — left tackle Octavious Bishop, center Russell Gaskamp, right guard Ben Adams and right tackle Jay Humphrey — start up front for Texas. Sophomore behemoth Leonard Davis has been wearing out opposing defensive tackles when he comes in to the game.

The Huskers will counter with nothing out of the ordinary. If the Huskers' front seven can limit Texas' big-play running game as they did in 1996, it will be a long day for the Longhorns on the field and, more importantly, on the scoreboard. ■

The roles were reversed. But the finish was comparable.

Or it almost was, anyway.

"At the very end there, I thought it would be ironic if we would have scored on the last play and took it into overtime," Missouri coach Larry Smith said.

Such a finish would have been ironic. But it was not to be.

Nebraska's defense simply wouldn't allow it.

Last season, the Cornhuskers needed Matt Davison's miraculous pass reception on the final play of regulation to defeat upset-minded Missouri, 45-38, in overtime at Columbia, Mo.

This season, Missouri needed a miracle, which it didn't get.

What it got instead was a 10-yard loss on the game's final play. Eric Johnson sacked Tiger quarterback Corby Jones as time ran out to preserve Nebraska's 20-13 victory at Memorial Stadium.

Missouri faced second-and-10 at the Cornhusker 22-yard line with four seconds remaining.

"I didn't have a prayer," Jones told reporters afterward.

"The guys ran the routes they were supposed to, but there were too many (defensive) guys standing back there. I was just trying to run around and find somebody open somewhere."

Nebraska had no intention of leaving anyone open.

"We had a couple of people deep, just sitting back there in order to help us with an end zone throw," said Cornhusker coach Frank Solich. "You don't want to let a guy stand back there forever, and then at the end, if he sees receivers are not open, just throw the ball up for grabs and have a jump ball in the end zone."

Actually, Missouri's best chance at a miracle score in the final seconds came on the previous play on a Jones pass intended for John Dausman in the end zone with Erwin Swiney covering.

"It looked like it had the possibility to be caught," Solich said.

"The ball came out, and you move on to the next play. We had so many bad things happen to us, I thought maybe a good thing might happen at some point in time."

A little over a minute earlier, with 1:38 remaining, one of the bad things to which Solich referred occurred when Missouri recovered a mishandled second-down center snap at the Cornhusker 45-yard line. Solich had hoped his team could pick up a first down and run out the clock.

"But that was not the case, and we had to call on our defense once again," he said.

Nebraska had to rely on its defense all afternoon because of an offense that sputtered until the second half, when Monte Christo replaced Bobby Newcombe at quarterback.

Christo, a fifth-year senior who walked on at Nebraska, played two series in the first half and all of the second half, rushing for a career-high 67 yards and two touchdowns.

He was chosen as the Fox Sports Net Player of the Game for his efforts.

Newcombe started but again was hampered by a torn posterior cruciate ligament.

"I thought he was probably as healthy this week as he was the previous week and the week before that," said Solich. "But as I looked at him in the first half, I don't know that was the case."

"I think he was probably slowed

Shevin Wiggins races 53 yards on this third-quarter punt return to set up Monte Christo's first career touchdown run.

**Behind the Blackshirts
and a walk-on quarterback,
the Huskers survive the
revenge-minded Tigers**
By Mike Babcock

**The
Full
Mont**

Scott Bruhn



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with his injury more than what he has been the last couple of weeks. Bobby did some good things in the first half but probably wasn't as consistent as what he has been most of the season, and wasn't as consistent as maybe we needed him to be to get some things done.

"But you don't really throw any blame on one position, one player, because there was a collection of things we didn't do well offensively in the first half that kept us from putting points on the board. The thing we thought at that time was, in order to move the football, maybe we needed a change."

Solich stopped short of naming Christo the starter for this week's game against Texas, however.

"I'm not going to think about next week quite yet in terms of the quarterback position or any other position," he said. "We'll look at film. We'll see how practices go early in the week.

"We'll make determinations on the quarterback position, and certainly other positions."

Quarterbacks coach Turner Gill indicated, however, that some determination might be made on Newcombe's ability to play with the knee problem as early as the next day, Sunday.

Christo, who drew enthusiastic applause and chants of his name when he left the field, declined to speculate on whether or not he would — or should — be the starter against Texas.

"We'll just have to see how Bobby feels. The fans are great, but they're not the ones who make decisions. We have three good (quarterbacks)," Gill said, including redshirt freshman Eric Crouch, who has been bothered by a hip pointer. "I don't think there should be a controversy."

Television's player-of-the-game award went to Christo, and deservedly so.

But it just as well could have gone to any one of several Cornhusker Blackshirts, who were two turnovers away from posting a second consecutive shutout.

The first was a Christo fumble, which was scooped up and returned 41 yards for a touchdown by 6-foot-4, 280-pound defensive tackle Steve

Erickson. The second was a Kris Brown field-goal attempt that was blocked and returned 53 yards to the Nebraska 25-yard line.

The Tigers scored, but not until their fourth try from the 1.

"I was happy about that goal line stand," said Cornhusker rush end Mike Rucker. "Even though they scored, I was proud of the fellas on defense for not backing down.

"They barely got in, and we used that (as motivation) later in the game."

Missouri tailback Devin West was stopped by middle linebacker Jay

responded with Brown's 30-yard field goal on the final play before intermission to cut the deficit to 13-6, Solich was not pleased.

"I thought we had opportunities we didn't capitalize on, and I was concerned that if we didn't get things in-hand and not let some bad things happen to us, if we continued to play in the second half offensively like we did

Correll Buckhalter, who started in the place of DeAngelo Evans for the second straight week, outgained Missouri's Devin West, the nation's second-leading runner entering the game, 125-72.

Scott Bruhn



Foreman and rush end Chad Kelsay on first down. West was stopped by Johnson and safety Mike Brown on second down. And he was stopped by Foreman again on third down, just inches short of the goal line.

Foreman was involved in 12 tackles, including one quarterback sack.

Jones advanced to his left on fourth down and managed to get the ball in the end zone.

Freshman Brian Long, who missed the extra-point kick following the first touchdown, was successful on the second, and with 3:52 remaining in the first half, Missouri had built a 13-3 lead.

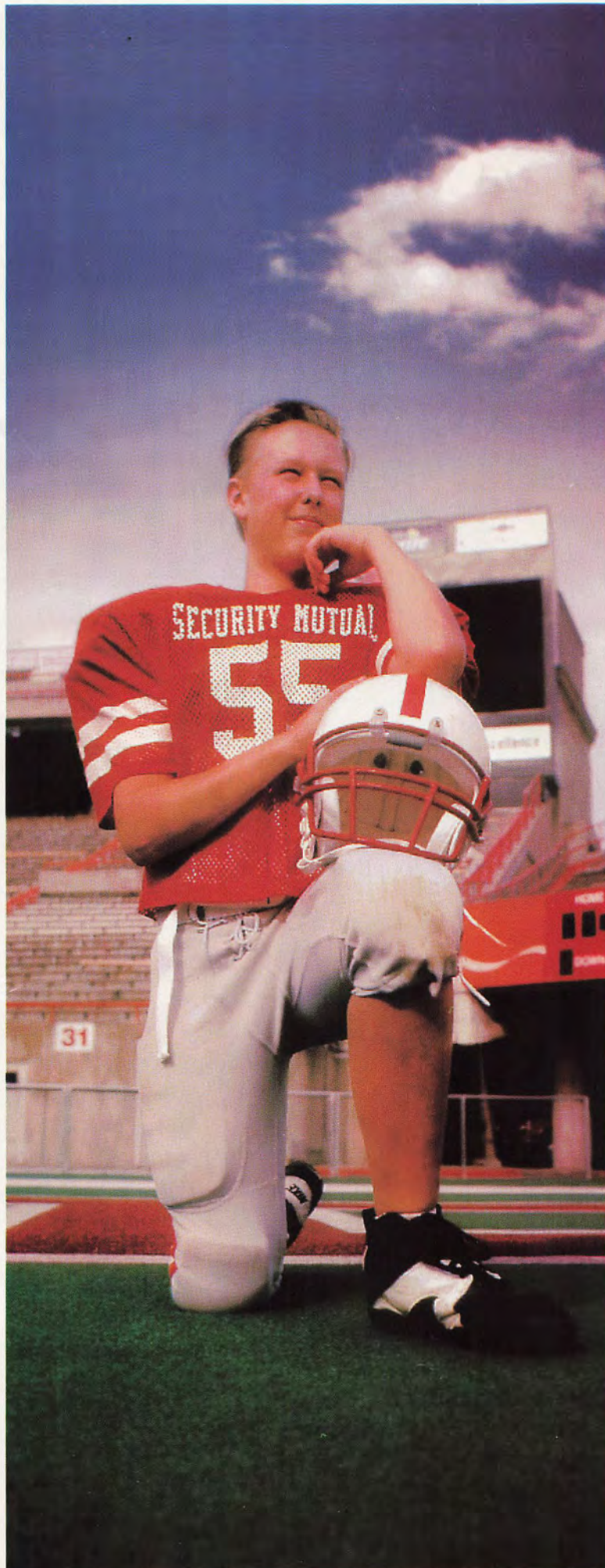
Even though the Cornhuskers

in the first, we might not be able to get this thing turned around."

Early in the third quarter, it appeared Nebraska's offensive problems might continue. On their second possession after the intermission, the Cornhuskers drove from their own 20-yard line to the Missouri 12, only to see the usually reliable Brown miss on a 29-yard field-goal attempt.

Three plays later, however, after strongside linebacker Brian Shaw sacked Jones for a 5-yard loss on third down, Nebraska got a break in the form of a 53-yard punt return by Shevin Wiggins.

The Cornhuskers needed six plays to cover 14 yards. Christo scored the

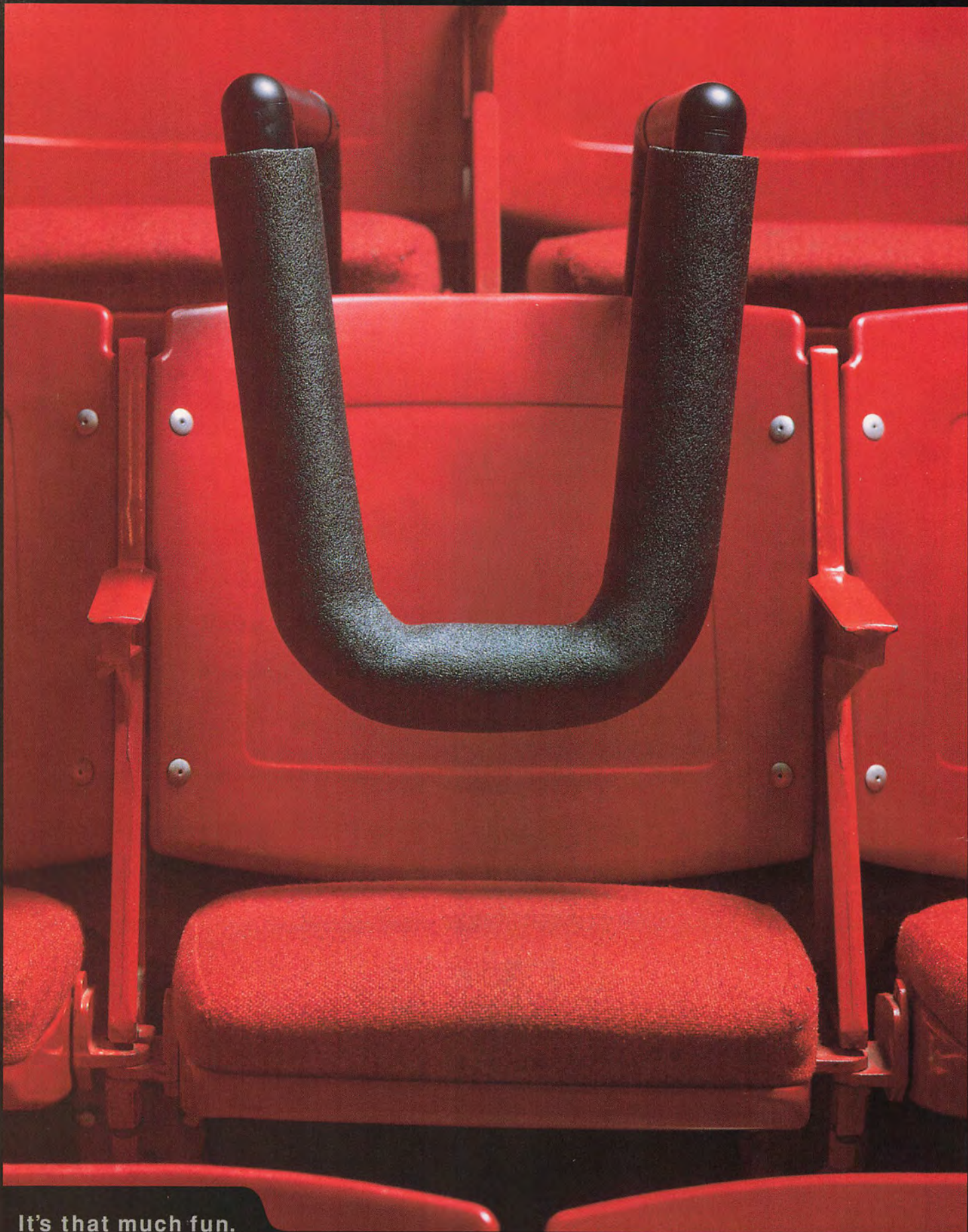


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first touchdown of his college career from one yard out, and with 1:32 remaining in the third quarter, the score was tied at 13.

Nebraska got another break in the kicking game on Missouri's next possession when Vince Sebo shanked a punt that traveled six yards to the Tigers' 49-yard line. Christo scored his second touchdown on a 3-yard run to cap an eight-play drive, and the Cornhuskers had all they needed.

Missouri's West, who entered the game as the nation's second-leading rusher, was limited to 72 yards on 24 carries, while Nebraska's Correll Buckhalter ran for 125 yards on 25 carries.

"Buck is an up-the-field type of runner. I think he showed that again today," Solich said of the 6-foot, 225-pound sophomore I-back from Collins, Miss. "I think Buck, it looked like to me from the sideline, was getting the most out of the plays he had. He ran strong, ran tough.

"It was the kind of game where if you don't have that kind of running back in there going for you, then you've got problems because there's going to be a need to pick up 2, 3 yards after contact."

Buckhalter, who also caught two passes for 20 yards, started for the second consecutive game, and fifth of the season, with sophomore DeAngelo Evans still sidelined by a tailbone injury.

"I think offensively we understood that we needed to pick it up on our end to make this thing work," said Solich of the second half. "So I think there was a determination factor."

That determination was there defensively from the opening kickoff until the final play.

Missouri managed only 166 total yards. "To go up against an offense that was as solid as that, a team that has run the ball up and down the field against a lot of teams this season, and to come out and shut that offense down says a little bit about the way our defense played today," Kelsay said.

"Give Nebraska credit. They have an excellent defense," said Missouri's Smith.

Christo was quick to agree. He watched from the sideline as the Tigers were thwarted in their attempt to perform a miracle as time ran out.

"At the end, I was down on one knee," he said. "I had my fingers crossed." ■

4TH & 1 INCHES

More News From The Missouri Game

- Nebraska extended its winning streak against Missouri to 20 games. The victory was the Cornhuskers' 47th in a row at Memorial Stadium, the nation's longest current home winning streak.

- **Frank Solich** is the first Nebraska head coach to defeat Missouri in his first season since **Pete Elliott's** 1956 Cornhusker team defeated Missouri 15-14 at Memorial Stadium. The first Missouri games for **Bill Jennings**, **Bob Devaney** and **Tom Osborne** were losses.

- **Shevin Wiggins'** 53-yard punt return that set up Nebraska's first touchdown was the longest of his career. He also returned a kickoff 40 yards to set up a **Kris Brown** field goal attempt.

Said Wiggins of the punt return: "I was just looking to make something happen. We needed something big, and our job playing on the special teams is to make something special happen.

"We did that at the right time."

- Senior **Joel Makovicka** moved into fourth place on Nebraska's career rushing list for fullbacks. He carried seven times for 31 yards. The top three are **Andra Franklin**, **Dick Davis** and **Tom Rathman**.

- Even though he was limited to 72 yards on 24 carries, Missouri tailback **Devin West**, who went into the game as the nation's second-leading rusher, refused to accept defeat.

"If you're a winner, you don't accept losing at all," he said. "That was a team we could have beat and probably should have beat. But offensively, we lost the game.

"We know it. They probably know it, too.

Nebraska is a great football team, but when you believe you can do something, you should come out and do it."

Nebraska will face the nation's leading rusher in Texas' **Ricky Williams** this Saturday.

- Nebraska finished with a significant advantage in field position, beginning, on the average, at its own 38-yard line compared to Missouri beginning on its own 25. Cornhusker punter **Bill LaFleur** contributed to that 13-yard advantage, by averaging 49.3 yards per punt on four punts.

Missouri's **Vince Sebo** averaged 45.1 yards on eight punts, including an 80-yarder. But one was shanked and netted only six yards, setting up a Cornhusker touchdown.

"We talked to our players all week about field position," said Solich, who believed that field position would be critical in the game.

"Special teams can supply you with great field position or hurt you when it comes to field position. Today the special teams were great for us in that regard."

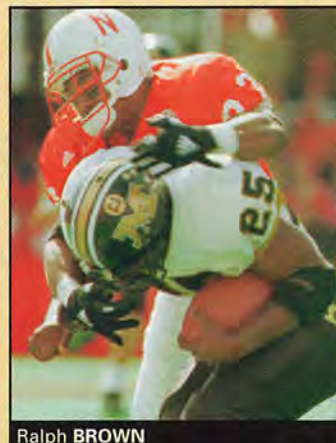
- The drama of the last two Nebraska-Missouri game has "been great for the fans," Solich said. "I don't know how good they've been for the coaches. The players, certainly when you win them, you enjoy being in those kinds of games. They're the ones you remember for a long, long time.

"When you lose them, they're kind of tough on you."

- Missouri's 166 total yards were the fewest allowed by Nebraska's defense this season.

The previous low was 210 yards by Alabama-Birmingham. The Tigers were averaging 266.3 yards per game rushing, fifth-best in the nation.

Missouri finished with a rushing net of 77 yards on 37 carries. ■



Scott Bruhn

Ralph BROWN

1998 Schedule/Record (7-1)

Aug. 29	vs. Louisiana Tech\$	W, 56-27
Sept. 5	Ala.-Birmingham	W, 38-7
Sept. 12	@ California	W, 24-3
Sept. 26	Washington	W, 55-7
Oct. 3	vs. Oklahoma St.&	W, 24-17
Oct. 10	@ Texas A&M	L, 28-21
Oct. 17	Kansas	W, 41-0
Oct. 24	Missouri	W, 20-13
Oct. 31	Texas	12:30 p.m.
Nov. 7	@ Iowa St.	1 p.m.
Nov. 14	@ Kansas St.	1:10 p.m.
Nov. 27	Colorado	1:30 p.m.

\$ Eddie Robinson Football Classic • Memorial Stadium • Lincoln, Neb.
& Arrowhead Stadium • Kansas City, Mo.
(Times are subject to change and are Central)

BY THE NUMBERS

Nebraska vs Missouri
Oct. 24, 1998 • Lincoln, Nebraska

Score By Quarters

Missouri	0	13	0	0	—	13
Nebraska	3	3	7	7	—	20

Team Stats

	MU	NU
First Downs	10	22
Rushing	5	16
Passing	5	4
Penalty	0	2
Rushing Attempts	37	61
Yards Gained Rushing	106	276
Yards Lost Rushing	29	20
Net Yards Rushing	77	256
Net Yards Passing	89	72
Passes Attempted	20	16
Passes Completed	8	8
Had Intercepted	0	0
Total Plays	57	77
Total Net Yards	166	328
Avg. Gain Per Play	2.9	4.3
Fumbles-Lost	2-1	4-2
Penalties-Yards	5-41	4-26
Punts-Yards	8-361	4-197
Avg. Per Punt	45.1	49.3
Punt Returns-Yards	0-0	4-66
Interceptions-Yards	0-0	0-0
Fumble Returns-Yards	1-41	0-0
Kickoff Returns-Yards	3-56	1-40
Possession Time	27:06	32:54

Individual Leaders

NEBRASKA

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Buckhalter, C.	25	125	5.0	16	0
Christo, M.	20	67	3.3	16	2
Newcombe, B.	9	33	3.7	12	0
Makovicka, J.	7	31	4.4	9	0

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Newcombe, B.	7-11-0	63.4	65	0
Christo, M.	1-5-0	20.0	7	0

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Buckhalter, C.	2	20	10.0	14	0
Wiggins, S.	2	17	8.5	12	0
Jackson, S.	2	12	6.0	6	0
Haafke, B.	1	16	16.0	16	0
Davison, M.	1	7	7.0	7	0

Name	Att.	Good	LNG
Brown, K.	4	2	38

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Wiggins, S.	2	65	34.5	53	0
Walker, J.	1	2	2.0	2	0
Brown, R.	1	-1	-1.0	-1	0

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Wiggins, S.	1	40	40.0	40	0

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Foreman, J.	3	9	12	1-4	0	1-4
Brown, M.	1	7	8	0	0	0
Wiltz, J.	2	3	5	0	0	0
Kelsay, C.	1	3	4	0	0	0
Rucker, M.	2	2	4	1-2	0	0
Kaiser, L.	1	3	4	0	0	0
Shaw, B.	1	3	4	1-5	0	1-5
Ortiz, T.	3	1	4	1-7	0	0
Johnson, E.	1	3	4	1-10	0	1-10
Polk, C.	1	3	4	0	0	0
Finley, C.	0	4	4	0	0	0
Brown, R.	2	2	4	0	0	0
Warren, S.	0	3	3	0	0	0
Swiney, E.	1	2	3	0	0	0



Jay Foreman's 12 tackles led another stellar performance by the Nebraska Blackshirts.

MISSOURI

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
West, D.	24	72	3.0	12	0
Black, D.	2	5	2.5	3	0
Jones, C.	11	0	0.0	7	1

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Jones, C.	8-20-0	40.0	89	0

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Dausman, J.	4	34	8.5	12	0
Black, D.	2	7	3.5	7	0
Wise, K.	1	32	32.0	32	0
Layman, K.	1	16	16.0	16	0

Name	Att.	Good	LNG
none			

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
none					

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Posey, C.	1	24	24.0	24	0
Jones, J.	1	18	18.0	18	0
Rhodes, R.	1	14	14.0	14	0

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Piersey, H.	5	8	13	0	0	0
Easter, C.	4	7	11	0	0	0
Robinson, J.	5	4	9	0	0	0
Sterling, A.	2	6	8	0	0	0
Wyatt, J.	3	4	7	0	0	0
Odum, B.	1	6	7	0	0	0
Marriott, J.	2	4	6	0	0	0
McCamy, D.	2	4	6	1-3	0	5-3
Gibson, M.	3	2	5	0	0	0
Erickson, S.	1	3	4	0	0	0
Smith, J.	2	2	4	0	0	0
Jones, J.	1	3	4	1-3	0	5-3
Jurineack, T.	2	1	3	0	0	0
Perkins, W.	1	2	3	1-2	0	0
Posey, C.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Potter, R.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Jones, C.	0	1	1	0	0	0

'98 SEASON STATS

RUSHING

Name	G	Att.	Yds.	YPG	TD
Buckhalter, C.	8	99	602	75.3	7
Makovicka, J.	8	74	368	46.0	2
Newcombe, B.	6	83	228	38.0	8
Evans, D.	3	38	218	72.7	4
Alexander, D.	5	37	177	35.4	1
Crouch, E.	4	25	134	33.5	4
Christo, M.	5	47	182	36.4	2
Miller, W.	7	17	88	12.6	2
Runty, J.	3	2	31	10.3	0
Wiggins, S.	7	6	29	4.1	0
Legate, B.	6	6	28	4.7	1
White, D.	5	6	27	5.4	0
Brown, L.	1	1	13	13.0	0
Kingston, B.	2	3	9	4.5	0
Gragert, N.	1	1	3	3.0	0
Tillery, A.	1	1	3	3.0	0
Stanislav, J.	1	1	1	1.0	0
London, F.	7	1	-2	-0.3	0

PASSING

Name	G	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Newcombe, B.	6	50-79-1	63.3	712	1
Crouch, E.	4	19-37-1	51.4	236	1
Christo, M.	5	15-23-0	65.2	203	2

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds.	YPC	YPG	TD
Davison, M.	8	26	328	12.6	41.0	0
Wiggins, S.	7	14	197	14.0	28.1	1
Cheatham, K.	5	10	88	8.8	17.6	0
Jackson, S.	7	11	263	24.0	38.5	2
Buckhalter, C.	8	8	50	6.3	6.3	0
Haafke, B.	6	5	38	7.6	6.3	0
Evans, D.	3	3	23	7.7	7.7	0
Wistrom, T.	7	2	84	42.0	12.0	1
Makovicka, J.	8	2	42	21.0	5.3	0
Debates, T.J.	6	1	16	16.0	2.7	0
Brown, L.	1	1	11	11.0	11.0	0

FIELD GOALS

Name	G	Att.	Good	Long
Brown, K.	8	11	7	48

DEFENSE

Name	G	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	S/Yds.
Foreman, J.	8	21	38	59	4-11	0	2-7
Brown, M.	8	17	36	53	2-3	1-1	0
Kelsay, C.	8	24	24	48	7-28	1-0	2.5-20
Johnson, E.	8	20	27	47	5-25	0	4-25
Swiney, E.	8	18	18	36	4-17	0	2-12
Walker, J.	8	16	16	32	2-6	2-0	0
Kaiser, L.	8	12	17	29	6-17	0	4.5-16
Shaw, B.	8	10	18	28	3-10	0	1-5
Ortiz, T.	7	12	15	27	4-13	0	1-3
Rucker, M.	8	13	14	27	3-6	0	0
Brown, R.	8	16	10	26	0	1-43	0
Wiltz, J.	6	7	15	22	0	2-32	0
Vanden Bosch, K.	8	7	11	18	4-36	0	2-29
Warren, S.	7	6	13	19	0	0	0
Finley, C.	5	4	12	16	1-11	0	0
Jackson, J.	6	6	4	10	2-19	0	2-19
Craver, K.	7	5	5	10	0	0	0
Polk, C.	8	8	5	13	2-5	1-16	0
Wills, A.	8	5	3	8	0	0	0
Reynolds, K.	6	6	2	8	1-5	0	0
Kohl, J.	7	3	3	6	0	0	0
Toline, T.	7	4	1	5	0	0	0
Slechta, J.	5	2	3	5	1-3	0	5-3
Lohr, J.	7	2	2	4	0	0	0
Burrow, J.	7	2	2	4	0	0	0
Woodward, W.	5	1	1	2	0	0	0
Wichmann, J.P.	2	1	1	2	0	0	0
Vedral, M.	5	1	1	2	0	0	0
Raymond, S.	3	2	0	2	0	0	0
Tuttle, C.	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
McGinn, M.	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
McGraw, G.	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
Booker, D.	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Ryan, E.	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
Mehl, L.	1	0	1	1	1-5	0	0

TEAM STATISTICS

	NU	OPP
Total Offensive Yards	3300	2381
Plays	586	532
Average Per Play	5.6	4.5
Average Per Game	412.5	297.6
Net Rushing Yards	2149	852
Attempts	447	286
TDs Rushing	31	5
Net Passing Yards	1151	1529
Attempts	139	236
Completions	84	117
Average Per Pass	8.3	6.5
Average Per Catch	13.7	13.1
Average Per Game	143.9	191.1
TDs Passing	4	7
Sacks By-Yards	21-139	12-82
Fumbles-Lost	19-9	18-6
Penalties-Yards	44-397	69-496

Scoring	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	TOT
NU	62	76	62	79	0
Opponents	7	43	32	20	0

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NU's Top 10 QBs...

Steve TAYLOR

He could run as well as pass. And by the mid-1980s, that was what coach Tom Osborne required of his quarterbacks

That's Mr. Taylor to you... Florida State coach Bobby Bowden was profuse in his praise of quarterback Steve Taylor after the true sophomore from San Diego led Nebraska to a 34-17 victory against the Seminoles in 1986.

The game was the season-opener for both teams, as well as Taylor's first start.

"I really didn't see too much of Turner Gill, but they say he was the best that Nebraska ever had at quarterback," Bowden said. "I'll tell you what, Mr. Taylor can't be too far behind."

The evidence was in Bowden's favor. Taylor had completed 10 of 16 passes for 130 yards and two touchdowns, and he had rushed 22 times for 139 yards and another two touchdowns.

His debut as a starter was impressive, and worthy of the "Mr." designation.

Taylor also showed in the first night game ever played at Memorial Stadium why he had been described by the Lincoln and Omaha newspapers during his recruitment as "the

next Turner Gill."

He could run as well as pass. And by the mid-1980s, that was what coach Tom Osborne required of his quarterbacks. "After some tough experiences with Oklahoma, we felt our quarterbacks had to be mobile," Osborne once said. "We weren't willing to line up with 4.9 [in the 40-yard dash] quarterbacks anymore."

Taylor could more than hold his own in a footrace. He ran the 40-yard dash in an electronically timed 4.61 seconds, and at a solid 5-foot-11 and 195 pounds, he could take a pounding.

He had the physical ability to play a position other than quarterback.

"A lot of schools on the (west) coast talked about recruiting me as a 'quarter-



"I didn't see too much of Turner Gill, but they say he was the best that Nebraska had at quarterback. I'll tell you what, Mr. (Steve) Taylor can't be too far behind."

Bobby Bowden
Florida State coach

He would have none of that, however. He was a quarterback at San Diego's Lincoln High School, where he broke Marcus Allen's career total offense record, and he intended to remain a quarterback.

"I didn't want to be in that (quarterback-athlete) mold," Taylor said. "I told myself I was a quarterback. I could throw the ball and I could run. So why not go somewhere that would utilize my talents?"

Why not go to Nebraska and follow in the footsteps of Gill?

"All I knew about Turner was what I saw on TV, and what I saw on TV was pretty impressive," said Taylor. "He was on some pretty good teams at Nebraska. He

threw the ball well. He could run the ball well. He had Mike Rozier at I-back, Irving Fryar at wingback. Who wouldn't want to be in the same backfield with people like that? I figured, 'Hey, if he can do it, I can do it, too.' "

Taylor, whose No. 3 jersey was retired by Lincoln High after he finished, was a member of a nationally ranked Cornhusker recruiting class that included linebackers Broderick

RUSHING QBs

Player	Attempts-Yards-Avg.	TD
Steve Taylor (1985-88)	431-2,125-4.93	32
Tommie Frazier (1992-95)	367-1,955-5.33	36
Scott Frost (1996-97)	302-1,533-5.08	28
Turner Gill (1980-83)	290-1,317-4.54	18
Gerry Gdowski (1987-89)	152-1,211-7.97	17
Mickey Joseph (1988-91)	180-1,091-6.06	16

Thomas and LeRoy Etienne, turning down scholarship offers from Washington, California, Minnesota and Colorado.

He started the first four (of five) freshman-junior varsity victories in 1985 and averaged 9.1 yards per carry rushing. He scored seven touchdowns and completed 19-of-32 passes (59.4 percent) for 425 yards and five touchdowns, prompting a late-season promotion to the varsity.

He played at the end of a 27-7 loss to eventual national champion Oklahoma in the final regular-season game at Norman, Okla., then came off the bench against Michigan in the Fiesta Bowl game, directing and capping a 12-play, 77-yard touchdown drive that cut the score to 27-21 with 2:29 remaining.

Taylor finished spring practice in 1986 atop the depth chart and was the Cornhuskers' No. 1 quarterback for the next three seasons, leading them to a 29-6 record as a starter.

Nebraska was the Big Eight champion his senior year in 1988.

Despite his speed, Taylor was primarily a passer in high school, completing nearly 60 percent of his attempts to break the school record held by Damon Allen, Marcus Allen's brother. "One time my coach told me never to run the ball; that's why we have running backs," Taylor once explained.

"So I never ran the ball. I never ran the option."

Taylor ran options at Nebraska and ran them well, finishing as the leading rusher in Cornhusker history among quarterbacks with 2,125 yards and 32 touchdowns. He averaged 4.9 yards per carry. He rushed for 100 or more yards in six games, including that first start against Florida State in 1986.

His 2,125 career rushing yards rank 16th overall at Nebraska.

He also posed a passing threat, of course, completing 184-of-404 attempts (45.5 percent) for 2,815 yards and 30 touchdowns. A school-record five of those touchdown passes came in a 42-33 victory against UCLA at Memorial Stadium in 1987. He was 10-of-15 for 217 yards that day.

He and tight end Todd Millikan teamed up on the longest touchdown pass in Cornhusker history, a 73-yarder in a 27-24 victory against South Carolina in 1986.

Taylor ranks sixth in career passing at Nebraska and fourth in career total offense.

10 QUESTIONS

Huskers Illustrated talks with linebacker JAY FOREMAN

If you were a professional wrestler, what would your name be?

Probably the 'Big Dog,' because I'd try to be the best, and being the 'Big Dog' means you're the best.

You were a standout basketball player in high school. Who is the best basketball player on the Nebraska football team?

I'd say either Kenny Cheatham or Matt Davison. I'm OK, but I'm not up on their level. Those receiver guys still have their quickness. I've gotten bigger since I got here, and it messed up my quickness.

What is your favorite memory of your father's (Chuck) playing career with the Minnesota Vikings?

The only thing I can remember is watching them on TV one time when I was a little kid, and I didn't know that my dad couldn't hear me when I was talking to him, and I thought he was talking back to me. The camera was on him, and he said, 'Hi Jay,' and I said 'I love you.' I thought we were talking to each other.

Who is your favorite actor?

Robert DeNiro.

What was his all-time best movie?

I'd say *Heat*, because I liked the way he acted. I think he probably acts like that in real life. That's how real I thought it was.

Beside your father, who was your favorite player on the great Viking teams of the 1970s?

Probably Ahmad Rashad or Jim Marshall because they were both pretty good friends with my dad. They'd hang out together. Those were the two I remember the most.

What's the greatest job in the world?

Probably playing football professionally. Playing in college is almost like a job. But it's just something you love.

If you could play any other position what would it be? Probably rush end — somewhere on the defensive line — because it's probably a little easier than playing linebacker, and you get into the backfield a lot faster. But I'm probably not big enough. I wouldn't want to play offense because

you always get hit, and when the team goes bad you get blamed for it. I'd rather be on defense where you're behind the scenes.

If you could pick a person to sing the national anthem, who would it be?

Whitney Houston, because she sang at a Super Bowl and she was really good. She's a good singer.

What has been your all-time favorite road trip?

This past Orange Bowl. It was fun because it was my second time starting in a national championship game, and we had a lot going against us, and we still pulled it out. It was the last time I played with Grant Wistrom and Jason Peter, so that was also kind of special. I was older, so I knew how to appreciate it. Plus, I was 21, and I could go out and do things you can't do when you're not 21. ■

He played seven seasons in the Canadian Football League with the Edmonton Eskimos, Calgary Stampeders and Ottawa Rough Riders before returning to Lincoln, where he now sells real estate.

Taylor "was unbelievable," Bowden said after the Florida State game in 1986.

"I don't think Nebraska wins without him."

The Miami Herald's Gary Long wrote of Taylor after the game: "On down the road, Florida State University's defense will have to deal with Miami's Vinny Testaverde, Florida's Kerwin Bell and Michigan's Jim Harbaugh. But it's difficult to imagine any other quarterback giving them fits like Nebraska's sophomore quarterback Steve Taylor did Saturday night." ■



Jay Foreman would love to follow in his father's footsteps by playing professional football.

WHEN LAST THE TEAMS MET . . .

Texas faced fourth-and-1 at its own 28-yard line in the final minutes of the first Big 12 championship football game in St. Louis. The Longhorns were clinging to a 30-27 lead.

They lined up as if to go for the first down. The assumption was that they would attempt to draw the defense offside and then, failing to accomplish that, punt the ball away.

Instead, Texas coach John Mackovic gambled on a pass play from quarterback James Brown to tight end Derek Lewis, who gained 61 yards before being brought down.

The Game That Won't Go Away

Nebraska has won three national titles in the last four years, but if asked what game Nebraska fans remember most during that period, it's the loss to Texas in the inaugural Big 12 Championship

Priest Holmes then covered the final 11 yards for his third touchdown in the upset victory. Holmes, a second-team running back, finished with 120 yards rushing on only nine carries.

Nebraska, of course, was the Longhorns' victim that day.

Cornhusker fans can recite from memory the particulars. Nebraska went to St. Louis with a No. 3 national ranking and an opportunity to earn a trip to New Orleans for the Christmas holidays to play Florida State in the Sugar Bowl game with the national

championship on the line.

The Cornhuskers had recovered nicely from a 19-0 loss at Arizona State in the second game of the season with nine consecutive victories, the majority of them decisive.

Everything went according to plan — until the Texas game.

"I can't remember, in all my years I've been at Nebraska, so many big plays," Cornhusker defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said after watching Texas amass 503 total yards.

Longhorn quarterback James



The 37-27 loss to Texas in the 1996 Big 12 Championship game ended the Huskers' chances of a national three-peat.

Brown, who had predicted a Texas victory earlier in the week, passed for 353 yards and one touchdown, completing 19 of 29 passes. He was intercepted twice, but he wasn't sacked. It was the first time in 41 games that Nebraska's defense hadn't gotten to the quarterback at least once.

The Cornhuskers had taken a 27-23 lead early in the fourth quarter on Kris

Brown's second field goal, a 24-yarder. I-back DeAngelo Evans, a true freshman, had accounted for the rest of Nebraska's points, scoring three touchdowns. His third touchdown had given Nebraska its first lead, with 2:11 left in the third quarter.

With Ahman Green sidelined by a fracture in his left foot and Damon Benning ailing, Evans got the call and responded to the challenge, carrying a career-high 32 times for 130 yards in a breakthrough performance.

The defeat proved to be the springboard for the Cornhuskers' successful run at the coaches' national championship last season. Those who would return in 1997, most notably Grant Wistrom and Jason Peter, dedicated themselves that afternoon to winning another national title.

So, indirectly, and stretching the

ter.

Four plays later, Cornhusker middle guard John Bell recovered a fumble at the Texas 19-yard line to set up a 3-yard touchdown run by I-back Tony Davis. Rich Sanger added a 43-yard field goal — his second of the game — midway through the fourth quarter, and the upset was complete.

The Nebraska defense, led by Bell and linebackers Bob Nelson and John Starkebaum, held Roosevelt Leaks, the Longhorns' All-America fullback, to 48 yards rushing on 13 carries.

A Leaks fumble, which bounced off his shoe and into the hands of Nebraska's Steve Manstedt — who scooped it up and ran 65 yards to the Texas 8 — set up a second-quarter Sanger field goal.

An estimated 20,000 Cornhusker fans were among the 67,500 at the

There was bitter irony in the loss in the Big 12 Championship. Nebraska and Texas had been at odds on many issues during the formation of the Big 12 Conference.

point, you could say Texas contributed to that title. On the other hand, you could say the Longhorns kept Nebraska from winning its fourth consecutive title.

There was bitter irony in the loss. Nebraska and Texas had been at odds on many issues during the formation of the Big 12 Conference. And for the Longhorns to spoil Nebraska's national title chances only added to the bitterness for Nebraska.

Nebraska and Texas have played only four other football games against each other, with the Cornhuskers winning three. Although brief, the series certainly hasn't lacked drama.

The last time they met prior to the Big 12 playoff, Nebraska pulled the upset, defeating the Southwest Conference champion and No. 8-ranked Longhorns, 19-3, in the 1974 Cotton Bowl game.

Osborne's first team, the Big Eight runner-up, went to Dallas looking to atone for a 27-0 loss at Oklahoma in the final game of the regular season. The Cornhuskers managed to do that with a 13-point third quarter, initiated by senior Bob Thornton's return of a missed field goal.

With the score tied, 3-3, Thornton fielded the 54-yard attempt and ran it back 41 yards to set up Ritch Bahe's 12-yard touchdown run on a wingback reverse with 4:18 left in the third quar-

Cotton Bowl on an afternoon with 30-degree temperatures to watch Osborne coach Nebraska to a victory in his first bowl game.

Osborne had not yet been born when Nebraska and Texas played football against one another for the first time in the season-opener at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln on Oct. 7, 1933. D.X. Bible was in his fifth year as head coach and his second as athletic director at Nebraska, which handled the Longhorns, 26-0.

The Cornhuskers' single-wing offense, featuring All-America fullback George Sauer and quarterback Bernie Masterson, proved to be more than Texas could handle that day. The Longhorns were not alone, however. Nebraska shut out its next two opponents en route to an 8-1 record.

The Big Six-champion Cornhuskers' only loss was at Pittsburgh. If not for the loss, Nebraska might have received an invitation to play Stanford in the Rose Bowl.

The Cornhuskers did play Stanford in the 1941 Rose Bowl game thanks to an assist from Texas.

Bible, who was hired by Nebraska from Texas A&M at the suggestion of Notre Dame coach Knute Rockne, left to become coach and athletic director at Texas in 1937. The Longhorns lured him away with a staggering \$15,000 salary, twice what the university presi-



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dent was being paid.

Nebraska fans, who had formed a "We Want Bible" club in Lincoln in hopes of keeping him, were distraught. In eight seasons, his Cornhuskers were 50-15-7 with six conference titles. His final Nebraska team finished 7-2 and was ranked No. 9 nationally in the first Associated Press poll.

Bible brought similar success to Texas. According to the Longhorns' 1998 media guide, Bible "turned UT from a SWC (Southwest Conference) doormat to a nationally respected power."

His 1940 team defeated rival Texas A&M, 7-0, on Thanksgiving to ensure Nebraska's trip to the Rose Bowl. The Aggies had been regarded as front-runners for a bid opposite Stanford after an 8-0 start. Bible called the game "one of my most satisfying victories because it helped Nebraska."

Nebraska and Texas played a home-and-home series in 1959 and 1960, with the No. 17-ranked Longhorns winning, 20-0, at Lincoln to open the 1959 season, and Nebraska pulling a 14-13 upset of the No. 4-ranked Longhorns at Austin to open the 1960 season.

The 1959 game would have been uneventful if not for Cornhusker coach Bill Jennings' use in the fourth quarter of a unique, (and illegal) offensive alignment he called the "tandem-T."

Halfback Pat Fischer and quarterback Tom Kramer both lined up behind center, with the plan being that the defense wouldn't know which one had taken the snap.

Texas will try to do something no team (including UAB, below) has been able to do since 1991 — win in Lincoln.

Longhorn coach Darrell Royal immediately called attention to the illegal formation the first time Nebraska ran a play from it. And the chief of Big Seven officials, who was working the game, got in an argument with Jennings in the lockerroom afterward over the formation — which was illegal.

Jennings vowed to use the "tandem-T" again, but never did.

The Cornhuskers didn't need it against Texas the next season. What they did need was a 76-yard punt return for a touchdown by Fischer to pull the upset and earn a No. 12 ranking in the AP poll.

The euphoria of the opening-game victory was short-lived. Nebraska lost the next week to Minnesota, 26-14, and finished the season with its second consecutive 4-6 record.

Nearly 40 years later, the situation is reversed. Nebraska has enjoyed extraordinary football success while Texas has fallen on some hard times — by Longhorn standards.

Both programs have new head coaches this season. But several players who played in the 1996 Big 12 championship game are still around, including Longhorns Lewis, wide receiver Wane McGarity, who caught three passes for 96 yards and a touchdown in the 1996 game, and sensational tailback Ricky Williams, who was held to just 7 yards on eight carries by the Blackshirts in 1996.

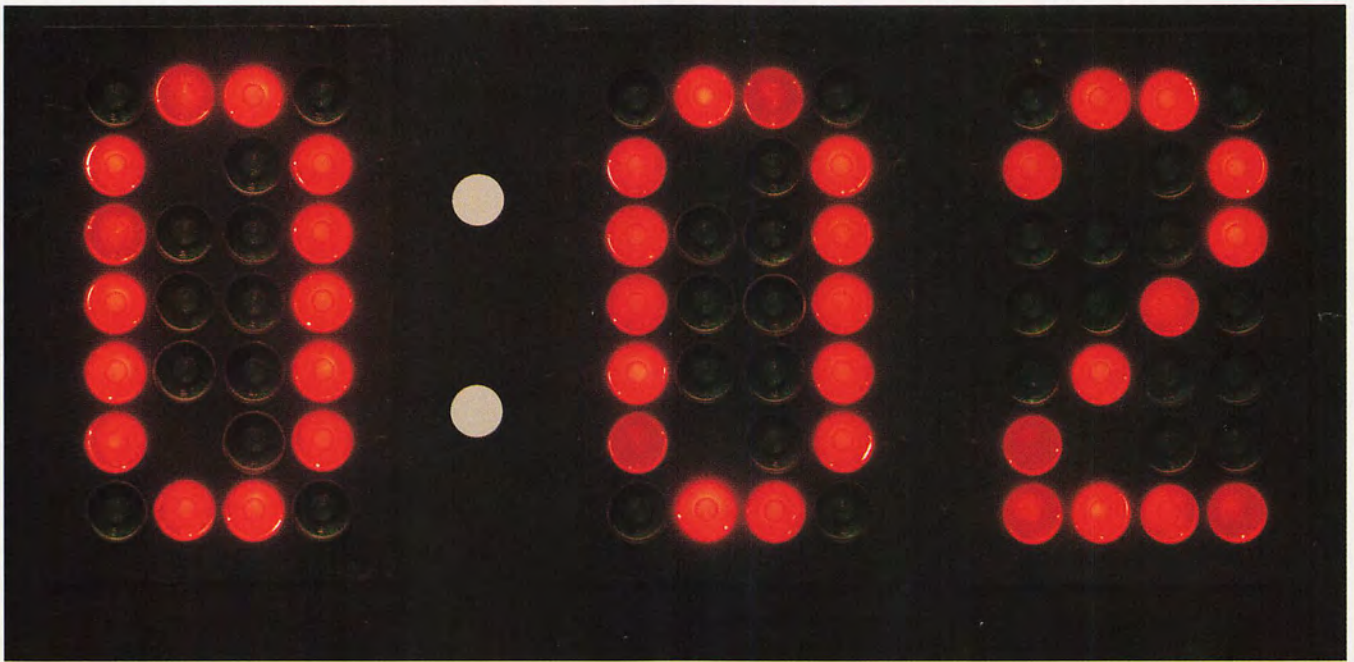
Even though Nebraska treated Texas A&M as if it were a Texas surrogate in last season's Big 12 championship game in San Antonio, defeating the Aggies 54-15, there's nothing like the real thing.

This time, the Longhorns will be in Lincoln, where visitors rarely win. ■

Scott Bruhn



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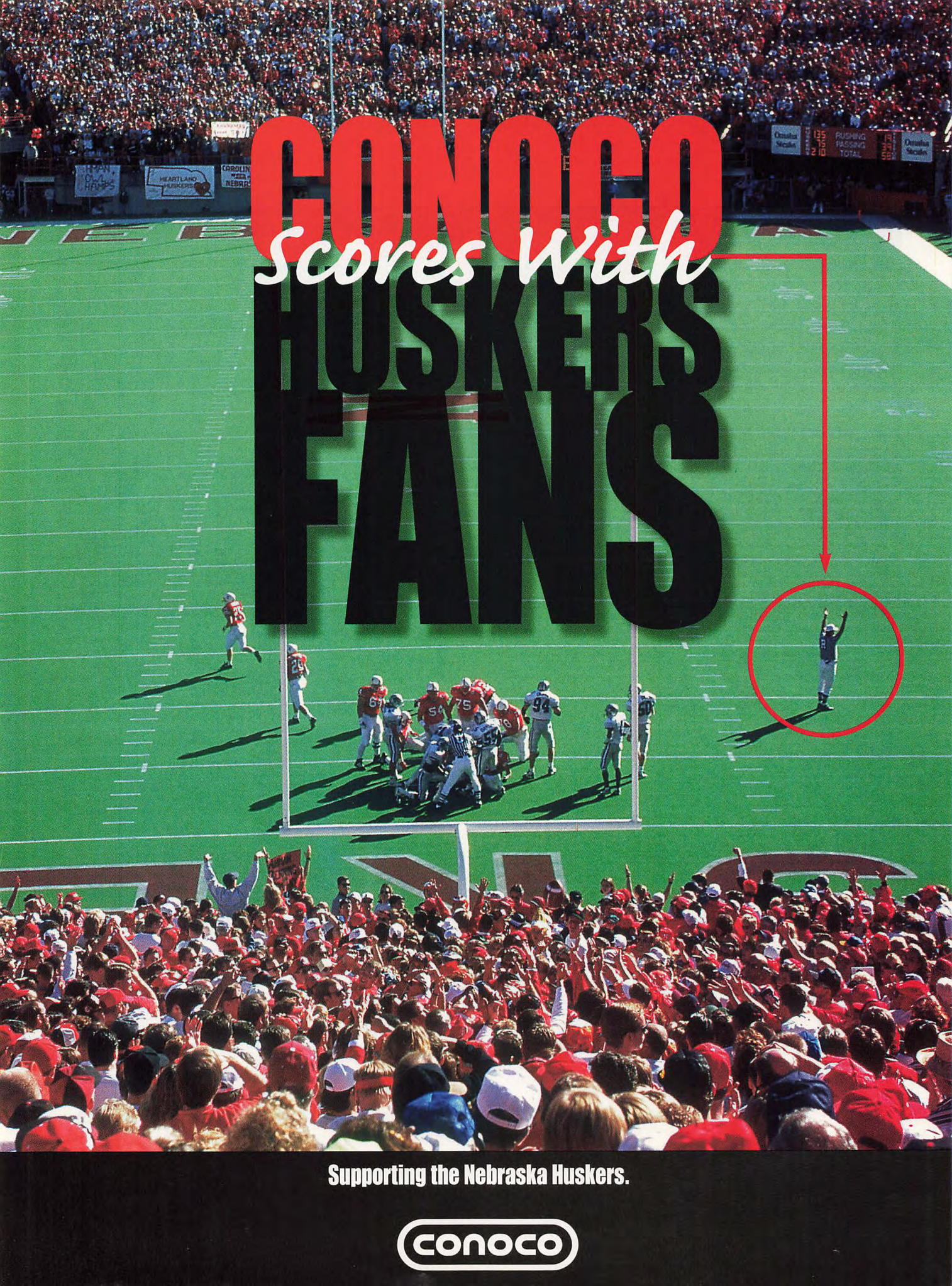
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Run Stoppers

By Mike Babcock

Can the Blackshirts duplicate the effort displayed the last time a back wearing No. 34 and eyeing the Heisman came to Lincoln?

IF NOT FOR Nebraska, Thurman Thomas would have led the nation in rushing in 1987. As it was, the Oklahoma State tailback finished second to UNLV's Elbert "Ickey" Woods.

Thomas rushed for 1,613 yards, the fifth-highest single-season total in Oklahoma State history.

But he came up 45 yards short of Woods because of a fired-up bunch of Cornhusker Blackshirts, who limited him to a net of seven yards rushing in a 35-0 Cornhusker victory at Stillwater.

Thomas, who was averaging 140 yards per game, carried only nine times against Nebraska before giving way to Barry Sanders late in the third quarter. He was tackled for losses on three of the carries, and his longest run produced a 4-yard gain — at the end of which he fumbled the ball away.

It was a frustrating afternoon for the Big Eight rushing leader. "What's his (jersey) number, 34? Well, three plus four is seven," Cornhusker defensive back Charles Fryar said afterward.

That defensive effort against Thomas is recalled just about every time Nebraska faces an outstanding ball carrier, which will be the case this week when Ricky Williams comes

to Memorial Stadium.

The Texas running back is sprinting toward the NCAA career rushing record and trying to become only the seventh player in NCAA Division I-A history to rush for 2,000 yards in a season.

Iowa State's Troy Davis accomplished that remarkable feat twice, in 1995 and 1996.

Through six games, Williams had rushed for 1,225 yards and scored 22 touchdowns. He reached 1,000 yards in the fifth game of the season on the strength of a 350-yard effort against Iowa State.

Williams also is attempting to become the Longhorns' second Heisman Trophy winner, following Earl Campbell who won the award as the nation's best collegiate player in 1977.

Williams, who led the nation in rushing and finished fifth in the Heisman race last season, is wearing the number Campbell wore in the NFL. Interestingly enough, the

Nebraska lives and dies by stopping the run. In the 1990s, only 26 backs have rushed for more than 100 yards against the Huskers.

number is 34.

That's another reason — albeit a tenuous one — to recall the Thomas story.

Thomas was a Heisman hopeful in 1987, until he encountered Nebraska. So was UCLA's Gaston Green, who was limited to 46 yards on 19 carries by the Blackshirts a month earlier at Memorial Stadium. He had rushed for 100 or more yards in eight consecutive games, dating to the previous season.

Such performances have become commonplace under Cornhusker defensive coordinator Charlie McBride, which stands to reason because of the emphasis he places on stopping the run. "If you can keep people from running the football, then you've got a good start on a good defense," he said.

Nebraska used an odd-front base defense in 1987, "built around stopping the run," McBride said. "That was the biggest concern I had going from an odd front to an even front."

He wasn't sure how the attacking 4-3 base defense the Cornhuskers began using in the early 1990s would hold up against the run. "But we just made a commitment to it," he said.

The record shows they have held up quite well against the run.

Through the first seven games this season, the best any ball carrier had done against Nebraska since McBride became defensive coordinator in 1982 was 189 rushing yards by Sanders in 1988, the season he won the Heisman Trophy. Even so, he was held under his per-game average of 238.9.

The Cornhuskers have been even more impressive against the run in the 1990s. Through seven games this season, they had allowed 100 or more yards to an individual rusher only 26 times.

Colorado's Rashaan Salaam, the Heisman Trophy winner in 1994, ranks as the most successful ball carrier against Nebraska during that time, rushing for 165 yards and two

"What's his (jersey) number, 34?"

Well, three plus four is seven."

Charles Fryar on limiting OSU's Thurman Thomas to 7 yards in 1987



touchdowns in 1993 and 134 yards and one touchdown in 1994. The Cornhuskers, however, won both games.

Salaam, one of the six players in NCAA Division I-A history to have rushed for 2,000 more yards in a season, faced Nebraska three times, gaining 304 yards on 49 carries.

Iowa State's Davis also played three games against the Blackshirts, with his best game coming in 1996, when he rushed for 138 yards on 34 carries. His three-game totals were 66 carries, 269 yards.

Sanders rushed for 265 yards on 46 carries in three games against Nebraska, and Texas Tech's Byron Hanspard car-

ried 31 times for 107 yards in 1996, the season in which he rushed for 2,084 yards.

The Cornhuskers didn't lose any of the games involving Salaam, Davis, Sanders or Hanspard.

The second-best individual rushing effort against Nebraska during the 1990s, including the first seven games this season, was 151 yards and three touchdowns by Oklahoma's De'Mond Parker in 1996.

Traditionally, the Sooners have had the most rushing success against Nebraska, as a team as well as individually. Billy Sims rushed for 247 yards in a 17-14 Oklahoma victory in 1979, the most rushing yards gained against the Cornhuskers by an individual in the last 20 years and possibly ever, though records are not readily available.

Penn State's Curt Warner ran for 238 yards in a 30-24 Nittany Lion victory in 1981.

Oklahoma State's Ernest Anderson led the nation in rushing in 1982, with 1,877 yards. But he managed only 68 yards on 15 carries in a 48-10 loss to Nebraska at Memorial Stadium.

Anderson wore jersey No. 34, like Thomas — and Williams.

Cornhusker fans will be hoping that's an omen come Saturday. ■

INDIVIDUAL RUSHING AGAINST NU IN THE '90S *(Nebraska loss)

PLAYER (SCHOOL)	CARRIES-YARDS	YEAR
Rashaan Salaam (Colorado)	25-165	1993
De'Mond Parker (Oklahoma)	13-151	1996
Ken Oxendine (Virginia Tech)	20-150	1996 Orange Bowl
Skip Hicks (UCLA)	19-148	1993
June Henley (Kansas)	37-148	1993
Marv Seiler (Iowa State)	24-144	1992*
Larry Jones (Miami)	30-144	1992 Orange Bowl*
Beno Bryant (Washington)	17-139	1991*
Troy Davis (Iowa State)	34-138	1996
Eric Bieniemy (Colorado)	38-137	1990*
Rashaan Salaam (Colorado)	22-134	1994
David Thompson (Oklahoma State)	16-128	1995
William Bell (Georgia Tech)	16-127	1991 Citrus Bowl*
Troy Davis (Iowa State)	28-121	1995
Priest Holmes (Texas)	9-120	1996*
Chaka Johnson (Kansas)	16-120	1990
Mario Bates (Arizona State)	23-118	1992
Bam Morris (Texas Tech)	16-114	1993
Nathan Simmons (Oklahoma State)	26-114	1998
Dante Hall (Texas A&M)	32-113	1998*
Ja'Mar Toombs (Texas A&M)	10-110	1998*



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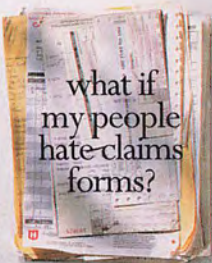
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Bread And Butter

A staple in the Husker lineup since her freshman year, senior Fiona Nepo could be close to serving up another national title at Nebraska

By Todd Henrichs

For the Nebraska volleyball team, Fiona Nepo is the definitive MVP.

Ask any Husker, and they'll say Nepo is the team's quarterback and cheerleader rolled into one. She is the school's career leader in set assists, yet some say she could be the best attacker on a team that ranks among the national leaders in hitting percentage.

Her jump serve is wicked and her blocking skills refined.

Just how valuable is the senior setter from Honolulu? Not even Nebraska coach Terry Pettit minces words.

"The truth is if Fiona Nepo goes on vacation, we're 4-5 now," Pettit said shortly after the team's 9-0 start. "We're deep, but nobody is deep enough to compensate for that kind of loss."

Fortunately, Nepo is home at Nebraska, and the No. 3-ranked

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Huskers are off to a 17-0 start.

Pettit repeatedly credits his team's experience when trying to explain the reason behind NU's best start since 1994. Maturity, it seems, is benefiting Nepo as much as any of her teammates. In her third season as the NU captain, Nepo says she is truly asserting herself for the first time.

"How I play is important because I'm the one on the court touching the ball more than anybody else," she said. "But I haven't done a good job leading this team until probably this year."

Nepo said it was a bit clumsy trying to be Nebraska's captain as a sophomore while in her first year as a starter. A year ago, she was careful not to overstep the bounds of lone senior Lisa Reitsma and take the team into her own hands.

This season there is no holding back. As a result, it may be difficult to keep Nebraska out of the Final Four this season.

"Even off the court she is the center of attention," said NU senior Megan Korver, the conference leader in hitting percentage. "Every ball that comes to her, she makes a better play. That's just something that I don't even think she thinks about."

In practice, Pettit says Nepo drives the Huskers, and on the court, she directs a Nebraska offense that is on a school-record pace with a .348 hitting percentage.

Nepo's 579 set assists this season accompany Nebraska's 726 kills. Her career total of 3,872 assists broke the mark established by current NU assistant coach Nikki (Stricker) Best, a Husker from 1990-93. Before this season, Nepo passed Val Novak, Christy Johnson, Lori Endicott, Tisha Delaney and Cathy Noth, the players who established Nebraska as Setter U.

Pettit said Nepo, the MVP of Nebraska's three early-season tournaments, has established herself as a national player-of-the-year candidate. To win the award, he says, the Huskers must contend for their first national title since 1995.

"They have a very realistic chance of a championship this year with (Nepo) running the show," Missouri coach Disa Johnson said after NU swept the Tigers earlier this season.

This summer, Nepo practiced with members of the U.S. National Team in Colorado. There, Pettit says, she began to understand her abilities as a player.

Around the country, Nepo is a setter known for making the right choice

es. So why did someone from Hawaii choose to play collegiately at Nebraska?

"People always ask me why I didn't go to Stanford or UCLA," Nepo said. "The truth is they didn't recruit me."

Nepo was not highly recruited out of University High, because as she says, mainland coaches figure the top players in Hawaii will stay at home.

Those coaches were among the most surprised when Nepo, a third-team prep All-American, orally committed to play at Nebraska. Her parents, Salei and Sunita, were even more surprised, and among the last to know.

"I waited a couple of weeks and then I told them," Nepo said while reflecting on her record-setting career. "They were pretty angry that I wouldn't talk to them about it."

"They still tried to talk me into going to (Hawaii), but I wanted to be far away. After my freshman year when we won the national championship, they weren't too mad at me then."

It's hard to imagine anyone mad at Nepo. She calls herself a class clown, but to her coach and teammates, Nepo is the classic leader.

For the Nebraska Coliseum fans, who Nepo say lured her away from home, as much as anything else, she is simply "Fee." And with every brilliant set, every surprise attack, every block, dig or ace serve, she is worth the price of admission.

Pettit knows well what Nepo is worth. Four years ago, he asked Nepo why she would want to leave the islands. Now he has to wonder what he would do without her.

"We have a lot of really good players on this team, but she's the person that allows them to play at that level," Pettit said. "If our passing breaks down, she can go get the ball. She's a great server, she's a great blocker, she's a great attacker, she's one of our best defensive players and she has experience."

But most importantly, Korver says, she has an unmatched passion for the game.

"I think mentally she's more pumped up about winning a national championship than anybody," Korver said. "She lives for the game. She lives for the competition. That's unique."

And those are the qualities most often found in a most valuable player.

"She doesn't have to play perfect," Pettit said. "Just be Fiona." ■



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MORE THAN ONE OPTION

The Nebraska women's basketball team began practice with a big hole to fill in its lineup. **Anna DeForge**, who averaged 18 points and eight rebounds last season, is now a member of the San Jose Lasers of the ABL.

Nebraska coach **Paul Sanderford** said a more-balanced lineup is one way to make up for DeForge's loss.

"Anna DeForge is a very good player and a big loss, but we have other good players," Sanderford said before beginning practices. "We're certainly not plan-

ning on going backward."

The Huskers' top four returning scorers are juniors, led by point guard **Nicole Kubik** of Cambridge. Kubik averaged 13.2 points a game a year ago as Nebraska tied a school record with 23 wins and advanced to the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

Nebraska, which could face as many as nine NCAA Tournament qualifiers in its non-conference schedule, opens the season Nov. 13.

ROGERS LEADS GOLF TEAM

Jamie Rogers tied for first place as the Nebraska men's golf team won its first invitational meet of the fall season.

The senior from Marrochydore, Australia, fired a 54-hole total of 204, including a round of 5-under-par 65, to share medalist honors at the Ram Collegiate meet at Fort Collins, Colo. Teammate **Steve Friesen** of Lincoln also finished in the

top five, carding a 207 that helped spark Nebraska to its four-shot victory over No. 16-ranked Oklahoma.

"We've been playing well," Nebraska coach **Larry Romjue** said. "We've got a good team that should continue to play at a high level."

Scott Gutschewski of Omaha was 11th in the Huskers' latest event. Through three tournaments this fall, Friesen boasted the team's low stroke average of 70.11.

Nebraska was to wrap up its fall season with quality tournaments at Duke and Stanford. The Huskers open the spring season in February.

SWIMMER MAKING WAVES

Janna Brock made a splash at the international level even before donning a suit and cap for Nebraska.

Brock, a Husker freshman from Allen, Texas, represented the U.S. at the Goodwill Games in New York this summer. There she compet-

ed against former Husker and Olympic gold medalist **Penny Heyns** of South Africa in the 200 breaststroke, her signature event.

The meet was a thrill for Brock, who turned down NU rival Texas to come to Nebraska. She said Heyns was a big reason why.

"You would see Nebraska's name a lot (in the newspapers) and I read a lot about Penny Heyns. All of that was real attractive to me," Brock said.

Brock has set a goal of qualifying for the Olympic Games of 2000, or more likely, 2004.

Rick Paine, a Nebraska assistant and coach of the Nebraska Aquatics club team, said she already is ahead of Heyns' pace at this point of her career.

Husker coaches have even uttered the words "world record" when talking about Brock.

"I'm sure she's not thinking about that yet, but to be honest with you, I am," Paine said. ■

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Mining For Prospects In Utah

RUMORS

It is no secret that Nebraska will go anywhere in the country to sign a football player. Over the last two seasons, the Cornhuskers have signed two players from Hawaii and one from Canada and already have a verbal commitment from a defensive tackle from Utah.

The Huskers are going back to Utah for another prospect in outside linebacker/running back **Fahu Tahī** (6-foot, 215 pounds, with 4.5 speed in the 40-yard dash) of Granger. As a junior, Tahī rushed for 2,197 yards and 26 touchdowns while making close to 80 tackles on defense. Through seven games this season, he has rushed for 1,473 yards and 21 TDs.

Most recruiters talk of Tahī as an outside linebacker or strong safety; however, he is not so sure that he's ready to give up carrying the football.

"I really like running the football," said Tahī. "Right now I feel that I am a better player running the ball than trying to tackle somebody who is. When I get to college I will play wherever they want me to play, but I hope I get a shot at carrying the football before they decide to put me over on defense."

Arizona, BYU and Utah have offered Tahī, while Washington and Nebraska are close.

Darin Naatjes (6-7, 240, 4.5) of Inwood (West Lyons), Iowa, is a prep quarterback, but most project him at a number of positions, including tight end, wide receiver, outside linebacker, defensive end and free safety.

Nebraska, Florida State, Arizona, Iowa and Iowa State all hope to find a place for him.

Anquan Bolden (6-1, 190, 4.4) of Pahoke, Fla., is one of the top 100 players in the country. He plays quarterback, but most project Bolden as a running back, wide receiver or cornerback. He isn't sure he wants to give up his quarterback duties, however.

"Some schools are looking at me as an option quarterback or a run/pass quarterback of some kind," said Bolden. "I really don't care where I play except that I think I want to stay on the offensive side of the ball."

Florida State is telling Bolden he could be the next Charlie Ward and has the slight lead over Auburn, Nebraska, West Virginia, Notre Dame and Ohio State.

Linebacker **Devon Davis** (6-1, 225, 4.6) of Austin (McCallum), Texas, is regarded as one of the top 20 players in Texas. Nebraska has always been one of his favorite schools, but he is leaning towards Tennessee, with UCLA, Michigan, LSU, Florida State, Notre Dame, Texas A&M and OU also in the picture. ■

A Home Where Inside Linebackers Roam

In Nebraska's pressure defense, inside linebackers are given ample opportunities make big plays

By James HALE

In today's college football climate it's cool to play linebacker at Nebraska. Ever since the Cornhuskers went to a pressure defense, relying on speed more than brawn, the linebackers have been the key focal point of the attack.

Outside linebackers became beefed-up middle linebackers, strong safeties became outside linebackers, and all of a sudden, high schools across the country were producing a new breed of linebacker who could run with running backs and put fear into quarterbacks.

No longer are Cornhusker linebackers in just to back up the defensive linemen. Instead, the defensive tackles take on as many offensive linemen as possible so that the inside linebackers can run freely, attack from all angles and live in an opponent's backfield.

Jay Foreman is a great inside linebacker for the Cornhuskers, but he's a senior and two other upperclassmen are juniors. The Cornhuskers are searching for new linebacker talent to reload their depth.

The Cornhuskers are returning to Honolulu (St. Louis), Hawaii, to recruit one of the very best inside linebackers in the country. **Joe Siofele** (6-foot-2, 230 pounds, with 4.6 speed in the 40-yard dash) is the top prospect in Hawaii and the best player in one of the very best prep programs in the country. A combination linebacker/fullback prospect, Siofele said he loves playing defense, and it shows with his average of 12 tackles per game.

"I really like to play hard-nosed football, love to attack and really get after people," said Siofele. "I love to pursue the ball carrier and feel I am a physical player. However, I can cover in the passing game. Thanks to my athletic ability, I can run around and keep up with receivers. I have been a defensive end so I know how to rush

the passer. This is my first year at middle linebacker, but it feels so natural for me that it's seems as if I have been playing here all my life."

A year ago Siofele had 71 tackles, 19 for loss, four interceptions and two fumble recoveries. Siofele felt he was having an even better year on his 4-1 team this season. The Cornhuskers have signed two players out of St. Louis in recent years, and they lead on Siofele.

"I really like the Nebraska program, and the fact that I have two very good friends that already play there is a big plus to me," said Siofele. "I have never visited the Nebraska campus, so I don't know really what it is like, except for what people of told me. I am sure that it is great, and there is no question about their football program. Nebraska is second to none and always produces great teams and players."



Dominic Raiola (above) was the Husker football team's first scholarship recipient from Hawaii. The Huskers signed his high school teammate **Tony Tata** last year and don't plan to stop there.



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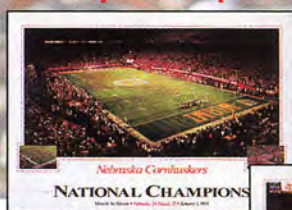


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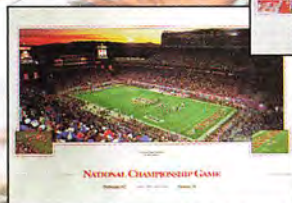
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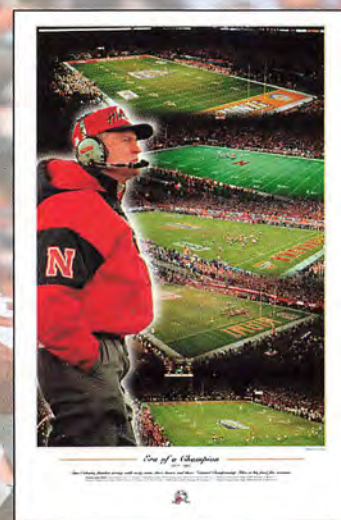
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Nebraska leads Colorado, Arizona, Stanford, Northwestern and California.

Byron Hardman (6-3, 225, 4.5) of Jacksonville (White), Fla., is rated along with Siofele as one of the top inside linebackers in the country. Hardman's size and speed is hard to match, and even harder to find on the prep level. White is 5-0 at press time, and Hardman, with 63 tackles, four sacks and one interception is the key reason why. A year ago, 'Bam' made 120 tackles and managed four interceptions.

Hardman runs so well that he can easily pursue to the outside, and he covers wide receivers like a defensive back. In fact, Hardman said that he wouldn't be surprised if he played strong safety in some defensive schemes. Hardman is wide open concerning recruiting, with Nebraska, North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Virginia and OU all fighting to get a look.

"I really like the winning tradition at Nebraska," said Hardman. "It's something that you really can't ignore. The school is a little far away from home, but they are so good that I still have to consider them. They have a great tradition, and I am certainly considering playing there."

Mike Nattiel (6-2, 210, 4.6) of Newberry, Fla., is the nephew of former Gator running back Ricky Nattiel. Mike is a dominant performer with an incredible 176 tackles to his credit a year ago. Nattiel is leaning toward Florida, but Nebraska is making it interesting with Notre Dame, Ohio State and Michigan also calling.

Justin Brester (6-3, 229, 4.8) of Burlington (Edison), Wash., is one of the top three players in Washington. He is having a great senior season, recording 47 solo stops, 25 assisted, seven tackles for losses and three sacks through five games. The Cornhuskers are solid contenders for Brester, as he has family ties to the state of Nebraska.

"I was born in Lincoln but moved with my family when I was one year old," said Brester. "My brothers were six and seven and I still have relatives that live there. My dad loves Nebraska football and was always rooting for them when I was a kid. So I rooted for them, too, because I always wanted to do what my dad did. I went to their camp and was just in awe of their facilities and how they go about their business. I love the Nebraska line-

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backer coaches. They treated me with respect and class, and I learned a great deal about linebacker play."

Brester also attended the Washington camp and says the two programs are pretty close. At the moment, Nebraska, Washington and Washington State are his top three choices, with Oregon, Oregon State and Michigan also getting a look.

Jory Helms (6-3, 220, 4.6) of Chicago (Leo) is getting a lot of attention despite playing for an 0-7 team. Helms was in on 110 tackles a year ago and already has 73 tackles to his credit this season, with two forced fumbles, two sacks and one quarterback hurry that resulted in an interception. Helms is leaning toward Iowa State with Iowa, Michigan State, Nebraska and OU also getting his attention.

"Nebraska plays as such a team, and that is what makes them successful," said Helms. "They get tremendous media exposure, which helps the athletes in the long run and their program. Nebraska plays a great brand of defense, and I would love to play there someday."

Jared Morris (6-4, 230, 4.65) of Brownwood, Texas, is considered a top 100 prospect in Texas and one of the top five middle linebacker prospects in the state. Morris teams with heralded quarterback recruit **Colby Freeman** to place Brownwood as one of the top teams in Texas Class 4A.

Brownwood coach Steve Freeman, Colby's father, says Jared is a rare and talented athlete.

"Jared is extremely intelligent and does some remarkable things on the field," said Steve Freeman. "He makes adjustments as the game goes along and is able to come off the field and give us a clear idea what is happening on the field. He plays with a tremendous enthusiasm. His physical abilities are very good too. He plays very physical for us, can run well and is also an excellent tight end prospect. Jared could easily weight 245 to 250 pounds when he's through growing."

Morris and Freeman want to go to college together. That is their wish, not their mandate. They are trying to make it happen, and Texas A&M, Nebraska and Texas have all shown interest in both.

Toron Wooldridge (6-4, 215, 4.5) of Houston (Lamar) is a tremendous speed linebacker. Through six games, Wooldridge has over 70 tackles and five sacks. Texas A&M is a slight leader over Nebraska, Kansas State, Baylor, Notre Dame, OU and Oklahoma State. ■

CAMPUS LIFE

As Seen Through The Eyes Of Billy Haafke

BILLY HAAFKKE REMEMBERS the day reality hit him like a crackback block. He was a college freshman, a smooth-faced split end with marginal hands and an unyielding will.

Haafke's will would be tested over the next five years. That became clear the first day of practice in 1994 when the walk-on from South Sioux City checked the depth chart at his position and saw his name listed ninth out of 10.

"I called my dad that night from the dorms and told him, 'Don't ever expect me to see the field here,'" Haafke recalls. "I didn't think I'd ever play. But he told me to stick with it. He remembers the call. He always reminds me of it."

The 5-foot-11, 190-pound Haafke has hit the jackpot this season, averaging about 25 plays a game. The casual fan, however, probably didn't notice him until he caught three passes for 23 yards in Nebraska's 28-21 loss at Texas A&M.

The football gods showed Haafke they can be awfully cruel. There he was, sprawled face down in the Kyle Field grass as A&M's Sedrick Curry celebrated his interception in the game's final minute.

The ABC announcing crew criticized Haafke for running the wrong pass route. Nebraska receivers coach Ron Brown bristles when asked about the play. He doesn't want to talk about it, except to say Haafke wasn't at fault.

Haafke said it was a matter of miscommunication. Half the team ran one play, he said, half the team another.

Haafke will forever remember the good parts of his best game to date, particularly two catches for first downs during the fourth-quarter touchdown drive that pulled Nebraska to 28-21. In the past, he was lucky if a ball was thrown his way.

"I feel badly we lost, and I wish we could have that last play back," Haafke said. "But at the same time, I was pleased with my play. It was a bittersweet feeling, really."

The Texas A&M game wasn't the first time the football gods dealt Haafke a cruel blow. After the first game of his senior year in high school, Haafke sliced up three of his fingers with a table saw while helping his dad build a roof.

Even though Haafke nearly lost two of his fingers, he returned for the final three games, playing with what amounted to a club on his injured hand. The injury helps explain why no Division I scholarship offers came his way.

After spring practice last April, Brown recalls, Haafke was fourth on the depth chart, his prospects for meaningful playing time still bleak.

"A lot of guys would have wilted at that point," Brown said. "They would have turned it down a notch. Maybe they would have stuck with the program, but they would have gotten frustrated. Billy fought back. He was like, 'Man, I'm going to go out there and make it real hard for Coach Brown to say no to me.'" ■ — *As told to Steve Sipple*



Billy HAAFKKE

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Christo Makes It Count

Although the references aren't new, walk-on quarterback Christo can probably write his own headlines now that he has been "discovered"



**Mike
BABCOCK**

THE IMAGE on the HuskerVision screens was of a smiling Monte Christo. Nebraska's senior quarterback was wearing a black cape. The background music was a Bach fugue.

The image — followed by the words "Count of Monte Christo" was shown after Christo scored each of his two touchdowns in the Cornhuskers' 20-13 victory against Missouri.

The capacity crowd at Memorial Stadium responded enthusiastically.

"I haven't seen it yet," Christo said of the video as he was waiting to be interviewed afterward in the South Stadium varsity lounge. A red welt was forming beneath his right eye.

"They were kind of nasty down there at the bottom of the pile," he said of Missouri's defenders.

"They got me a few times. Hopefully, it won't swell up too much."

OK. But what about that HuskerVision video?

Christo smiled. "I was just following directions," he said.

The video had been taped earlier in the week, "Tuesday or Wednesday," said Christo. The taping had taken about 20 minutes, and the first take was the one that got used, he thought.

The theme of the video was a play on the title of the Alexandre Dumas novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*. "That's something I've kind of grown up with," Christo said. It's not exactly a coincidence. His maternal grandmother, an English teacher, suggested he be named Monte.

A lot of people aren't that familiar with the Dumas novel. It's about a character, Edmond Dantes, who seeks revenge after escaping prison.

The comparison doesn't extend beyond the obvious. Christo isn't vengeful, or at least he wasn't after the Missouri game. He refused to directly accuse Missouri defenders of taking cheapshots.

"It's kind of hard to get a black eye when you've got a facemask," he admitted.

Christo's Cornhusker career might make for a decent short story if not a novel.

He walked on from Kearney (Neb.) High School in 1994 and appeared to be headed for a medical redshirt before

playing in the eighth game of the season — at Missouri.

He played because Tommie Frazier was sidelined by a blood-clot problem, Brook Berringer was recovering from cracked ribs and a partially collapsed lung and backup Matt Turman appeared to suffer a shoulder separation when he was hit out of bounds by a Tiger defender.

"I went in and got about four or five plays," Christo said.

They were the only plays he would get that season. And they might have been the only plays he would ever get at Nebraska had he been less determined. He missed spring

practice in 1995 because of lower back surgery, and he missed his second season because of a knee injury in fall camp.

He came back to play in five games in 1996, then suffered a cracked vertebrae during fall camp last season. Again he came back to play sparingly in five games.

When he suffered a ligament tear in his right thumb — a repeat of the injury that nearly caused him to take a redshirt as a true freshman — he considered giving up football and concentrating on his schoolwork. He's an excellent student, majoring in biology, with plans for medical school.

"The closest I came (to quitting) was last spring," said Christo. "But this was something I've always wanted to do. I always had confidence in my abilities, that if I got called, I could do it."

Whether the black eye was intentional or not, Missouri tried its best to intimidate him.

"I heard a couple of comments when I came in: 'No. 9 is scared.' I don't know where that came from," he said. It might have been because his fumble was returned for Missouri's first touchdown.

Christo moved along and got his photo on the HuskerVision screens.

The Count of Monte Cristo.

Christo hasn't even read it, though "I've read a condensed version."

Cliff's Notes? "More like a picture book," he said.

The *Classics Illustrated* comic book version, maybe.

Anyway, he's familiar enough with the story to know that the HuskerVision video is a cross between *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Count Dracula*, the vampire of Bram Stoker's novel.

"I think they were off a little bit, had their Counts mixed up," Christo said. ■



Christo got the call against Missouri, because sophomore Bobby Newcombe was less than 100 percent as a result of a knee injury that hasn't healed.

Scott Bruhn

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